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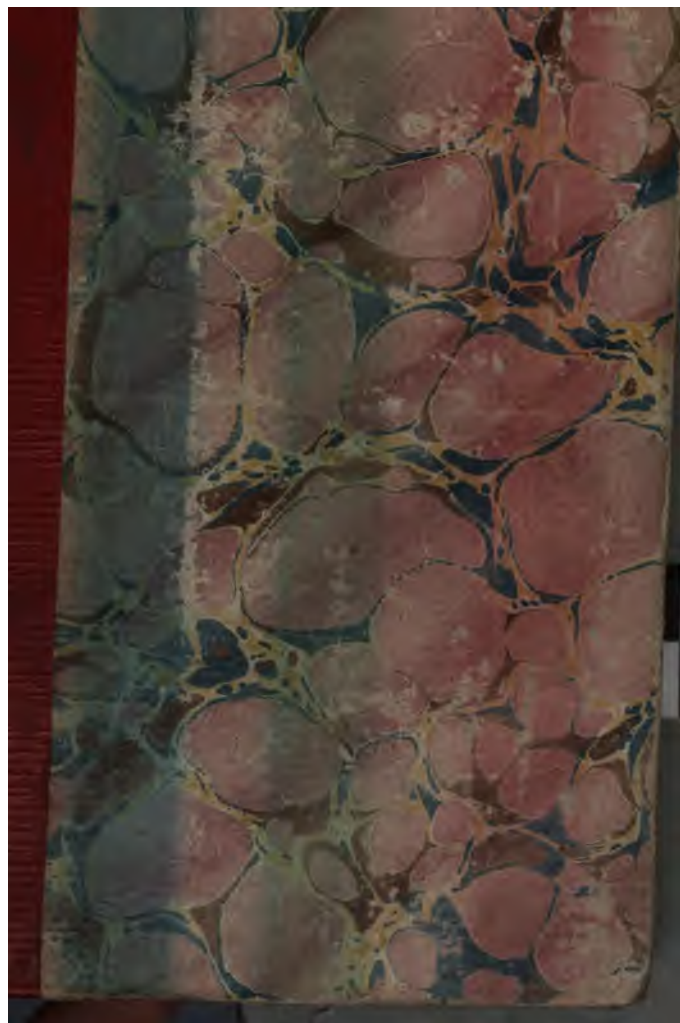
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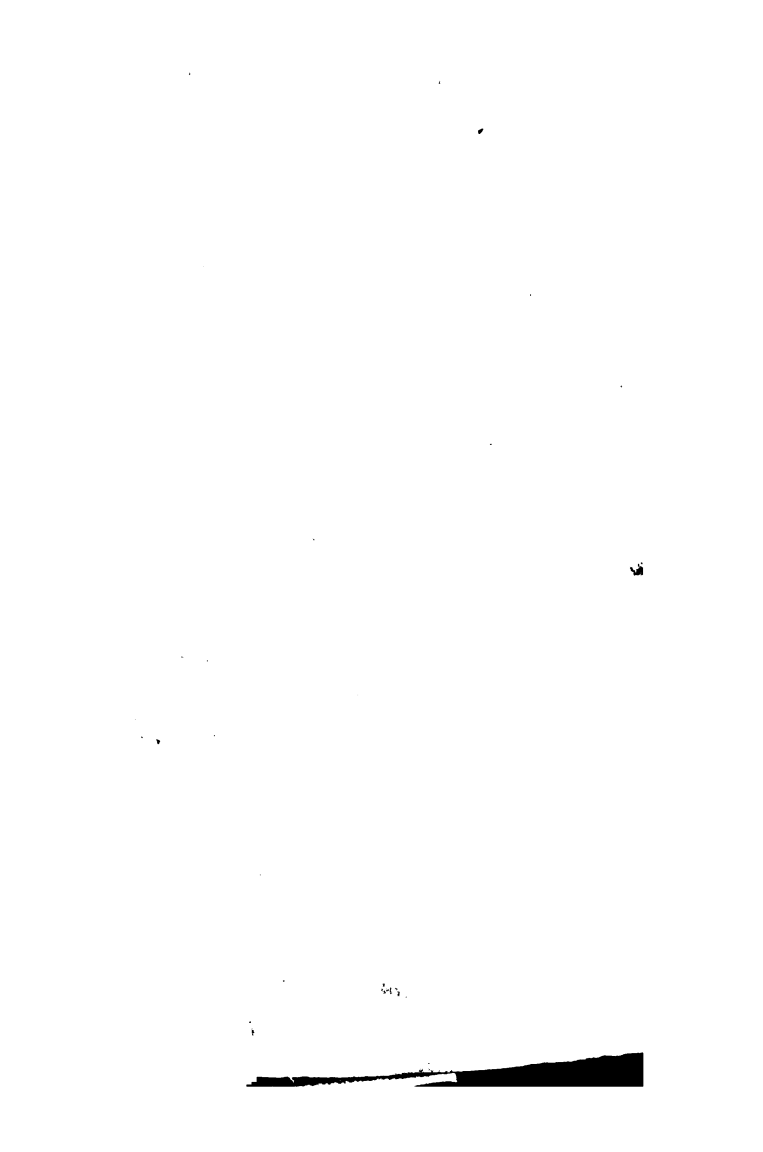
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THE  
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OF  
SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHING,  
AND  
FAMILY RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION;  
IN WHICH  
THE PRESENT DEFECTS IN COMMUNICATING  
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE TO THE YOUNG  
ARE INVESTIGATED,  
AND  
THE LESSON SYSTEM  
OF  
TEACHING THE SCRIPTURES  
IS  
FULLY DEVELOPED.

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"I had rather speak five words with my *understanding*, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown tongue*."—1 Cor. xiv. 19.

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THE effect produced by the appearance of the **FIRST EDITION** of this Book, upon the minds of those interested in the **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION** of the **YOUNG**, greatly exceeded the anticipations of its Friends.—It was not pressed upon the notice of the Public,—nor announced in any of the newspapers,—but was allowed silently to feel its way, and extend itself by the importance of its subject, and the recommendation of its friends, and the success of that System of Education which it recorded and illustrated. The method of Teaching which it proposes, has thus escaped the dangers of infancy, and evaded the outcry and prejudice usually excited against new systems. The soundness of its principles has now been satisfactorily sustained by the test of experience—having succeeded in every instance of trial without one exception, and its nature requires only to be known, in order to insure a speedy and universal adoption.

The **FIRST EDITION** has been long out of stock, and urgently called for. There have been many reasons for delaying the **Second Edition** until the **First** should be sufficient for the Public,—and that it now appears before them in some measure complete, backed by the recommendation and authority of two years successful operation.

*Edinburgh, 14th July, 1827.*



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THE  
END AND ESSENCE  
OF  
RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

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CHAPTER I.

*On the Indifference of Parents as to the Religious  
Education of their Children.*

CHILDREN are born to an endless existence, and time is the threshold which ushers their souls into this illimitable eternity. This short and single step of life is to them fraught with the most momentous consequences. The well-being or the wretchedness of the soul depends upon it. Watchfulness and enlightened care during this short moment of time secure happiness and peace; while carelessness and indifference entail on the individual pain and misery, without mitigation and without end.

Religion is the only solid footing upon which this important step can be made with safety; and every parent is intrusted by God with the special duty of superintending and directing his child in the acquirement of its truths. The attainment of



religion and religious principles, therefore, as involving the most important interests of the child, ought to be the one great and leading object with every conscientious parent. Food, raiment, riches, nay, even health itself, and every thing else which relates solely or principally to the conveniences and comforts of time, must be but secondary and trivial in the parent's estimation. Nothing of a temporary and fleeting nature ought for one moment to stand in competition with religion, which the Almighty has appointed as the only means of preparing for, and securing an interest in, the important and unchangeable realities of a happy eternity.

To every enlightened and judicious Christian, however, who looks abroad into the world, the contrast betwixt this admitted truth, and its adoption in real life, is most marked and melancholy. Parents,—even professing Christian parents,—are seen on every side of us, mindful of the lesser parts of their duty, but forgetful of the greater. They are anxious, and careful, and constant, in securing and promoting the bodily health and the temporal comforts of their little ones;—and indulging, not improperly, in the gratification derived from the neatness of their apparel, the activity and sprightliness of their motions, the mental energy or quickness of observation indicated by their remarks, and the genteel address, modest demeanour, manliness of conduct, or dignity of sentiment, which they can sometimes perceive in these objects of their tenderest affections.—But, alas! in how few instances do we perceive a similar anxiety about *religion*?—In what particular line of conduct towards their children can we trace any thing like

an equal share of exertion for their spiritual welfare?—These temporalities,—good in themselves no doubt, but yet but temporal,—seem to absorb all their care, and to the promoting and perfecting of which, at least nine-tenths of their exertions are devoted. O how painful!—how humiliating!—to see rational creatures thus amusing themselves, and playing antics with immortal souls, as if they were mere babies' toys, and made only for amusement! Souls, which are doomed to enjoy or to endure an eternity of blessedness or wo; and whose only chance of attaining the one, and of escaping the other, is inclosed within that delicate bubble of life and time, with which their inhuman parents are so thoughtlessly sporting;—seemingly unconscious that the slightest accident or disarrangement of particles may in a moment burst the airy compound, and consign the darling objects of their folly to endless and irretrievable ruin.

There are, however, many honourable exceptions to this general neglect. Parents who feel, as well as profess to know the value of souls, will not allow their attentions to be absorbed by the things of the world; and though careful, and even troubled about many things, they will never forget that, for their children, as well as for themselves, there is *but one thing needful*. They value their children, not as they value toys, by the pleasure and amusement which they at present communicate, but as destined to be their companions and friends in another state. Their love for their children is of too noble and dignified a kind to admit, for a moment, of any degree of comfort or *satisfaction* at the idea of a perpetual separation at death. Their views and their hopes extend be-

yond the grave; and, in the spirit of true *Chris-* tian pilgrims, they not only rise above the *world* in their own affections, and steadily and daily look beyond it for their settled enjoyments, but they also labour assiduously to bring their little companions,—those lambs of Christ's flock, which their heavenly Father has given them to feed,—to indulge the same desires, to cherish the same hopes, and to endeavour, by all means, with themselves, to secure an interest in that inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away.

To such parents, we would, with all the warmth of brotherly affection and esteem, say, "Our hearts are enlarged towards you." We rejoice, that the Lord has put it into your heart to do this thing; and would gladly remind you of the promise made by the God of truth, that the child who is thus trained up in the way he ought to go, will not, when he is old, depart from it. But we would most affectionately remind you, at the same time, that the religion of your child must be the same in kind, if not in degree, with your own. You know, and you feel, that your religion has its seat, not in the head, but in the heart,—and so must the religion of your child. You know, that your religion consists not in empty sounds, nor mere professions, but, as the fruits of a living faith, in denying yourself to sin, and living to holiness and to God; and that all the satisfaction of religion which you enjoy, arises purely from a knowledge of the love of God as exhibited in Jesus Christ, and the daily delight which you receive, in being *enabled by his grace*, more and more to conform *your life to his will*, and to live to his glory. Now,

this is what your child must be taught, and this is the only way in which he, as well as you yourself, must go, if ever you expect to meet each other in heaven. This is religion;—and any thing short of this is spurious and false. Beware then of resting in that kind of verbal instruction for your child, which has been so improperly misnamed a Religious Education, or of being satisfied with that religion which is so only in name. It may, therefore, assist parents in their duty, and help us to what we have ultimately in view, if we shall shortly examine a little more minutely into the nature of that religion which children ought to be taught; and make some inquiry into the best means by which this may most successfully be done. This we shall make the subject of the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *Of the Kind of Religious Instruction necessary for the Young.*

THE Scriptures, the standards of our Church, and all our best divines, concur in explaining religion to be PRACTICAL GODLINESS; or, in other words, the knowing of the will of God, and the doing of it. The one the *means*, the other the *end*; but always including both.

Solomon, accordingly, under the Old Testament dispensation defines it to be "the fearing of God, and the keeping of his commandments;" —Our

Lord, in the New Testament dispensation, distinctly tells us also, that it is the "hearing," or knowing of his sayings, combined with "the doing of them;"—and the apostles, following in the same train, affirm, that it is "the hearer and doer of the word combined, who is blessed in his deeds;" and that the only sure evidence of the heart's being right, is to be found in its effects upon the conduct; the reality and genuineness of faith being always to be judged of "by its fruits." In our own day, however men may labour for definitions, and endeavour to explain religion by its accessories and concomitants, we must at last have recourse to the simple definition, from which we ought never to have departed, that religion is *practical godliness*; or, a subjection of the whole mind and will to the love and authority of God; thinking, and feeling, and acting, at all times, with an eye to him, and to him only. **This** is that godliness which constitutes the religion of heaven;—this has been the religion of all the saints since the commencement of time;—it is that which should be the religion of all men,—and it must also be the religion of Children.

If, then, religion be a complete conformity of the heart and life to the will of God, it is self-evident, that his will must be known before any one can conform himself to it; and as the Bible is the only revelation which it has pleased God to make of his will, it follows, that the Bible,—this one only revelation of the will of God,—must be the grand instrument, in the hands of Parents and Teachers, in the Religious Instruction of the Young; not so *much in making* them acquainted with the words of Scripture, as in communicating to them, by

means of their rational faculties, the *substantial will of God*, of which the words are used only as the medium.

This knowledge of the will of God, then, is evidently the first step to the attainment of practical godliness;—but it is only a step:—It is, no doubt, a necessary ingredient,—but it is not the thing itself. It is that part of religion which our Lord and his apostles designate by the “hearing of the word,” and the “knowing of his will,”—but which may be very fully possessed, and yet true godliness may never be attained. The next, and the most important step, therefore, to the attainment of godliness, is the practical use which is to be made of this knowledge. For this purpose, no part of the Word of God is without its use, and every verse in it is designed to be personally applied by each individual for the regulation of his heart and life. This is the use, the apostle tells us, which Christians are to make of it, when he says, that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness;—that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Here the apostle distinctly points out to us the use which the Scriptures are intended to subserve. They must first be known and understood, and then, by drawing out and applying to our own case, those Practical Lessons which they contain, whether for the purpose of strengthening our faith, reproving or correcting our conduct, or instructing us how to walk righteously in our daily intercourse with others, we may be gradually perfected in sanctification; and by an acquaintance with what is pleasing and displeas-

ing to God, and therefore to be followed or avoided, we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

From this it is manifest, that the attaining of this practical godliness, including, of course, practical morality in its most spiritual and extended sense, should be the **END AND ESSENCE OF ALL TEACHING**. Every previous step should be but means to this end, which should never, upon any account, be abandoned till it has been attained. And it must be evident, that however near we may be able to bring a child to this point, yet if he, by any failure on his part or our own, shall never be able to reach it, he misses the design for which the Scriptures were given; and, if he remain in this state, he is but a "hearer" of the Word, and not a "doer" of it. •

This view of the case gives us a most melancholy picture of the present system of religious education; where even the first step above alluded to is not always attained, and where the mere repetition of the words, is frequently substituted for the knowledge of the truths, of Scripture. We shall never be able to calculate the thousandth part of those mischiefs which have resulted from this absurd and superstitious mode of religious instruction. Absurd, inasmuch as it substitutes one thing, for another of a perfectly different nature; and superstitious, as it supposes, that the words of Scripture, and of the Catechisms, are possessed of some supernatural power, which, without the aids of reason, or the intellectual faculties, which alone distinguish man from the brutes, can purify the *heart*, regulate the life, and fit our children for *heaven*. But, even in those cases where the

Scriptures were so taught as to be understood, why should the teachers have stopt short at the very threshold, and leave to time and chance the effecting of the very thing for which the Scriptures were given? Why did they not pursue their object one step farther, and teach the children how to apply the truths to their individual case, for the confirming of their faith, and the regulation of their lives and conduct?—To accomplish this important object, and to show how it may effectually and easily be done, is the great design of what has been termed the “LESSON SYSTEM of communicating Religious Instruction,” and which it is the purpose of this short Treatise to explain and inculcate. We shall therefore make some inquiry into the defects at present existing in this important duty, that we may the more easily explain and enforce a proper remedy.

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### CHAPTER III.

*On the Effects of the Old System of Early Religious Instruction, as now practically exhibited in Society.*

It is to many a matter of great surprise, that, notwithstanding all the exertions now making, and which for many years have been made, for the purpose of communicating to the young a knowledge of God, of duty, and of the principles of religion, there is still so much practical igno-



rance exhibiting its baneful and deadening ramifications through every age and class of society. Although there is one day in every seven set apart exclusively for the purpose of attending to religion, we can scarcely find one solitary instance among the lower orders of our people, where there is the same general intelligence, the same rational, enlightened, and familiar acquaintance with the truths of Christianity, which, on examining them, we find they possess about the practice, or even the principles of their ordinary trades. This circumstance, viewed in the abstract, is the more surprising, as most of them have had much better opportunities of becoming familiarly acquainted with the fundamental principles of the one, than they have ever had of becoming acquainted with the scientific principles of the other: nay, what is still more, there have actually in most cases, if not in all, been more time spent, and more labour bestowed, and, without all question, a far greater degree of self-denial exercised, in learning catechisms, and psalms, and chapters, than they have ever exercised, or ever been called on to exercise, ~~in~~ learning, (not practising,) their ordinary occupations. Yet, when we examine the crop which has been produced by this great quantity of seed sown, what do we find?—Almost nothing.—A few leading ideas, exceedingly vague, and which can seldom be explained, even by the individuals themselves, appear to be the whole sum of their Scripture knowledge. And, in almost every case, we have to observe and regret a most melancholy deficiency in their knowledge of religion, of themselves, *and of the very first principles of the oracles of God.* This picture, in its colouring, is neither

overcharged nor exaggerated; and the range of society which it includes is much more extensive than is generally imagined. We have had occasion to know something of the matter, and have little doubt, that a sigh would escape from the breast of the conscientious reader, could he but distinctly perceive all who are included within the limits of its extended boundary.

Now, to what can we attribute this wide-spread contagion, but either to the total neglect of early religious instruction, or to the improper manner of communicating it? It cannot reasonably be attributed to want of capacity: for, as to every thing else, the persons of whom we speak are shrewd, intelligent, and at home:—Nor can it in general be attributed to the neglect of religious instruction; for, in most instances, the Bible has been learned and read, and the Shorter Catechism, that best of all compendiums of the Christian Religion, has, almost universally, not only been read, but committed to memory. We are therefore shut up to the conclusion, that the evil has arisen from some defect in the manner by which this reading of the Bible, and this learning of the catechism have been proceeded in when they were originally taught; and that this conclusion is the true one, we think may be easily shown, in the following manner.

Were ten intelligent Christian men, taken indiscriminately from the general mass of Christians in this country,—men who know the gospel, and are well acquainted with the doctrines of religion,—we think, that it might with confidence be affirmed, that at least nine of the ten have not received their knowledge, even of the leading *doctrines of Christianity*, from their having read, or

learned to repeat, portions of their Bibles or their Catechisms *when they were young*; but that they are almost wholly indebted for what knowledge they now possess to their own observation, and diligent inquiry in *after life*. Their knowledge of Christianity has been gradually acquired by their having improved the conversation of godly men, by carefully studying their Bible, or by regular and constant attendance upon the ministrations of pious ministers: But, had they neglected these, their religious knowledge, in so far at least as it arose from the mere reading or learning of their Bible and their Catechisms in youth, would have been almost nothing.

This to many will appear to be a very startling assertion; but it is not slightly hazarded. It will to every one be at least exceedingly probable from this consideration, that when the attention of any of those individuals, after having arrived at manhood, has been called to the Shorter Catechism,—the pages of his earliest associations,—he has almost invariably been pleased and surprised to find there such a rich store of Christian doctrine and gospel truth;—a treasure which, till that time, he knew not that it contained. Now, we do think it exceedingly probable, that had his knowledge, on any of the subjects there taught, been originally derived from that source, there must have remained some faint traces upon the memory of what had once before, however long, been really known or understood; and, at all events, even although this might not have been the case, it is contrary to all experience to suppose, that there would be such a strong and vivid feeling of originality forced upon the mind, as we ourselves have experienced, if at

any former period the ideas, which now please us so much, had been familiar.

It is, no doubt, true, and we acknowledge the fact, that we may retain the real substance of knowledge—the ideas regarding any subject—although we may have completely forgotten the source from which it was derived; and though we are convinced, that this does not apply to the present case, yet we do not, and need not regard the above deduction as affording more than a strong probability that our conclusion is correct. But if the words which first conveyed that knowledge, were, at the time, committed to memory, and have been all along present to the mind, it is then certain that the person in reverting to the idea or the doctrine, would uniformly think and speak of it in the very words by which it was at first communicated, in the same manner in which we use and apply a rule of syntax, or an axiom in mathematics when—but only when—it is clearly understood. If then the individual could repeat the words of the Shorter Catechism, and yet, on examining these words at some future period, can perceive something of which he was before unconscious, the conclusion is then obvious, that the words have never been understood; and, as the whole has been learned in a similar manner, it is equally clear, that his present knowledge on these subjects generally must have been derived from some other source.

If any doubt yet remains on the mind of the reader, he may, if he can repeat the Shorter Catechism, make a very entertaining and instructive experiment upon himself, which, if he has not of late made that book his peculiar study, will, we

have no doubt, be successful in showing him how pernicious is the custom of committing words to memory which are not previously understood, as well as in illustrating the correctness of the deduction drawn from the above premises. Let him here stop for a moment, and ask himself what he understands to be included in any of the leading doctrines of the Christian Religion,—that of *conversion*, for example. Let him, before proceeding farther, write down on a piece of paper all that he can think of, connected with that very simple, and to him most important subject;—and, having exhausted all that he knows about it, ask himself how he came to the knowledge of what he has written, and whether it was or was not, from his having, in his youth, learned the Shorter Catechism. If it was by that means, he should be able, without turning it up, to say in what question or place those circumstances which are included or connected with “conversion,” are to be found,—or whether they are to be found there at all. In this case, it must be evident that he has every advantage. He could, and very likely still can, repeat the whole Catechism from beginning to end; and if his knowledge on this particular subject, had ever been derived from that source, he could be at no loss to point it out; but if it is now found that he cannot recollect, even when his mind is set to search for it, any part of his Catechism which gives him the same information on the subject as that which he has written upon his paper, the conclusion is irresistible, that the knowledge which he possesses, on this particular subject at least, has been acquired from other sources, and by other means.

The subject is of the last importance; and therefore the candid reader will excuse us for our plainness of speech, or for using any thing like guile; but if he will ask himself the 31st question from the Shorter Catechism, and compare the answer with his paper, it is not unlikely that he may perceive still more clearly the solidity of some of the preceding remarks, and acknowledge, that his ideas relating to "conversion," were not received at the same time when he learned—what is the very *same thing in substance*, though there differently named—"effectual calling."

There is evidently, then, some great radical defect in the system of teaching the young religion; and, if its pestiferous influence has reached even to those who have possessed, and do still possess so many advantages, what are we to suppose are its effects on thousands who are not equally favoured? Why need we any longer wonder, that, with such teaching, there should be so much practical ungodliness, and juvenile delinquency, and sin. The wonder is, not that so little good has been done, but that there has been any; and that so very defective a mode of teaching religion, should ever have been at all instrumental, either in checking vice, or in promoting virtue,

## CHAPTER IV.

*Comparative View of the Religious and Worldly Knowledge of Children, and of the Nature and Efficiency of the Means by which each is severally acquired.*

To every attentive observer there will appear to be a striking difference between the *Religious*, and what we would call the *Worldly Knowledge* of children. When a child gives you an account of his age, his place of abode, his friends, his present occupation, or his future prospects, his answers are distinct, rational, and consistent; and were you to ask him the same questions in any form or variety of expression, provided he understood what you meant, he will not fail to return the same answers in substance, although the very moment afterwards he can neither repeat nor remember the exact words which were used either by you or himself. But were you, at that same time, abruptly to ask him any question concerning religion, he would immediately hesitate. You perceive that it is not a subject with which he is familiar; and though he has for years been weekly repeating the Shorter Catechism, which contains so beautiful a summary of Christian doctrine, he is scarcely able, from any part of it, to cull one idea on the subject, for the purpose of giving you an answer. You must hit upon the set form of words to which he has been accustomed; and the answer returned will most probably be given in the same manner, by a form of words, of whose

import, when closely examined, you find he knows little or nothing.

Now, here we find the same faculties, at the same time, and in circumstances exactly alike, exercised upon two separate classes of objects,—with a most remarkable difference, however, as to the efficiency of their operation; and we very naturally marvel how it is, that in the one case he is so much master of his subject, where there has been comparatively no pains taken specially to instruct him,—and in the other that he is so much at a loss, although he has been for years engaged in repeating the words which contain a summary of almost all that can be enquired at him; and we very naturally ask, Why is there not the same clear, distinct, and familiar communication in the one case, that there is in the other?—The answer to this question is just what we are in search of; and an accurate investigation as to the manner by which the one branch of knowledge has become so efficient, and the other appears in effect so nugatory, will give us a clue by which this labyrinth may be surely, and we hope successfully, explored.

With respect then to what we have denominated the *Worldly Knowledge* of a child, the first thing that strikes us as of being of importance is, that it is never *forced*. It uniformly keeps pace with the exercise of his reasoning faculties.—He understands all those subjects by which his knowledge is increased; but his knowledge is never advanced in the slightest degree by any thing which he either sees or hears, if he does not understand it. Tell him a story, no matter how long, provided he understand you, his mind is exercised, and he is entertained and improved. But the mo-



ment the intellect loses sight of its object, the ear may receive the sounds as before, but there is now no entertainment, and as little instruction. From this we perceive how objects in ordinary life may become familiar to the mind. The child's mind is necessarily engaged upon outward objects, but it never allows itself to be harassed by attending to more than it is capable of comprehending. All the rest are lost for the time. The child begins to understand first one thing, and then another, by degrees as it is capable; and as this is done without any artificial forcing, and in ordinary cases indeed without even the parents, or any one attending to the subject, what is thus obtained, though it be very gradually and slowly accumulated, is pleasantly and effectually acquired. These early associations become, as it were a part of the child himself, and can scarcely, at any future period, ever be separated from his mind.

Another thing worthy of our notice in the acquirement of worldly knowledge by a child, is, that he attends simply and only to the thing itself,—to the idea intended to be communicated,—and pays little or no attention to the means, or the words, by which it is conveyed to him. All that is necessary is, that he understand them. His information, no doubt, must be received by means of words; but these, having performed their office, by imparting the idea or the fact, are no more thought of. When this same idea has to be transmitted to a brother, sister, or companion, he has to produce words of his own, and never thinks of committing *the words* of his informant to memory for this purpose. *The exercise of mind necessary in finding and arranging words for the purpose of conveying*

the idea he has received, renders it still more familiar, while it gradually, by repetition, produces fluency, ease, and correctness of language in every after communication of a similar kind. Thus is his knowledge of outward objects gradually acquired, by hearing, observation, and reflection. Every circumstance which happens around him adds to its amount; while, by its not having been forced and mechanically piled upon the memory without the influencing and regulating operation of the judgment, all is in good order; every idea is in its proper place; and is ready at the call of the will to come forward whenever the subject requires it.

Religious knowledge, on the contrary, is communicated to children in a manner directly the reverse of all this. It is, in ordinary cases, altogether *artificial and forced*. A psalm, a chapter, a page, or a question, must be committed to memory, leaving the judgment to follow as it best can. Our Lord, in his injunction to Peter to feed his lambs, and the apostle, in so strikingly distinguishing between milk for babes, and strong meat for others, clearly establish the parallel between the improving and strengthening of the mind by knowledge, and the nourishment of the body by food; and as it is not according to the quantity of food which can be forced into the stomach, that the body is nourished, but only according to the quantity which it can properly receive and digest, so is it with regard to knowledge. If more be forced upon the child than it can comprehend, it not only does no good, but is productive of positive *evil*;—the surplus is not merely lost, but it is the *cause of neutralizing or deteriorating the whole*.

Again, we have seen the use, and the only use which, in the communication of worldly knowledge, is made of words, and which is one principal reason of its efficiency. But in Religious Instruction, how very different is the case? There, words in many cases comprise the greater portion of what children are taught. Learning chapters, and repeating questions, appear in practice to be all that is deemed necessary to the religious education of a child; and the consequence is just what might have been anticipated. All his ideas about religion, if he has any,—which we blush to say is not always the case,—are vague, dark, and undefined; and when he comes to grapple closely with them, they uniformly elude his grasp. If he be cross-examined on any part of practical religion, or Christian doctrine, in the same manner as was proposed in his worldly knowledge, we will find that his teachers have substituted sound for sense, and have given but an empty shadow, instead of the spirit or substance of real knowledge.

The pernicious effects of this mode of educating children, are not confined to the years of their childhood, but extend to every period of their life. The careless manner in which numbers of them are thus trained, produce many, and, were it not for the means of grace and the opportunities of improvement which they *afterwards* enjoy, would produce many more of the practical evils of unalloyed heathenism. When in after life, accordingly, these means are wanting, or are neglected, there is real, undisguised, operative wickedness, restrained only by the coercions of law, or the terrors of *punishment*. And even in those cases where *circumstances* in providence have concurred to enable

them to surmount this barrier in their early education, and to emancipate themselves from this state of total ignorance and depravity, it has always been at the expense of no small additional pains and trouble; and if they have become enlightened Christians, it has not been *because*, but rather *in spite of* this injudicious treatment when they were young. We confidently appeal to the observation of every person who has turned his attention to the subject;—and clergymen, in particular, who have had opportunities of knowing the fact, will acknowledge while they lament, that in numerous instances, young men and women have been ushered upon the stage of life, nominally taught indeed, but substantially ignorant of the very first principles of religion. Questions are repeated, but they are to them a dead letter; chapters are read, but seldom understood; sermons are heard, but they are but feebly comprehended, and, of course, almost immediately forgotten; and thus they remain, from year to year, with very indistinct and confused ideas of the doctrines of Christianity, which ought to be the great foundation upon which their hopes for eternity, as well as the obligation of every moral duty, should rest. These are the visible results of this monstrous evil, which it shall be the business of the following Chapter more particularly to investigate, and trace to its source.

## CHAPTER V.

*Inquiry into the Origin of those Defects which at present exist in communicating Religious Instruction.*

THERE are two distinct and separate paths which lie at the option of every teacher in the education of children. The one may be termed the pathway of the *memory*, and the other of the *judgment*.

The first part of a child's education is purely an exercise of the *memory*. The letters are placed before him in succession, he is enjoined to observe their form, and to remember them in connexion with their names. Then come the powers of the letters, their combinations, sounds, &c. all which is a tedious, cold, and in many cases a harassing series of exercises, both to the teacher and the child; but up to this point, the whole is necessarily, in the case of the scholar, a simple exercise of the *memory*.

As soon, however, as the child is able to form the letters into words, a double path presents itself to the teacher. He may either continue to pursue his exercises by means of the *memory* alone, or he may begin the exercise of the *judgment*, which is the new path that now opens itself to him. The first, as at this stage it gives much less trouble, is too often adopted; although the latter would bring him much sooner and easier to the end which he *ought to have* in view.

When reading continues to be taught in the manner first mentioned, as a mere exercise of the

*memory*, it must arise either from the want of time, or the want of care on the part of the teacher. Nature points out a directly opposite course in the education of the child. As soon as he can put letters into words, such as cat, dog, top, ball, &c. objects with which he is already familiar, the sound at once suggests to his mind the idea of the object, and he feels a sensible pleasure in having discovered it; and were this disposition, at this stage of his progress, cultivated, the child would never pass a word till he understood what it meant; and thus, as his ideas multiplied, his labour would decrease, and he would in a short time, be able of himself, to understand the greater part, if not the whole, of what he was taught to read. But this tendency in the child being neglected by the teacher, and as many new words are ever occurring which are not explained to him, and which he is not required to understand, the habit of reading mechanically is soon formed; which being progressively strengthened by every lesson read in the same manner, ultimately becomes so inveterate, that the child never thinks of the meaning of what he reads, finding that his task is made to consist solely in *pronouncing* words, whether he understand them or not; and thus they at last present themselves to the eye, without conveying any idea to the mind, except that of their sound or appearance.

In pursuing the other mode in the education of a child by means of the *judgment*, the teacher follows the plan directly pointed out by nature, and suggested by the child himself. As soon as the *child can put the letters of a word together and pronounce it*, he is required to tell what it means;

and having by degrees overcome the mechanical drudgery of reading, he attains the habit of looking beneath the mere words, and grappling with the ideas which they contain. These will, no doubt, be sometimes beyond his reach; but having been successfully set a going on the pathway of improvement, and having felt the pleasure of acquiring, by his own exertions, new ideas, he will be quite uneasy till he be able to add every new one which occurs to his former stock. The pleasure in this course always increases, while the difficulties lessen; as every successful effort invigorates the mind, and prepares the way for another victory.\*

In communicating religious instruction to children, a system similar to the error pointed out above, has, in too many instances, been most unhappily adopted. From the definition of religion given in Chapter II. it is obvious, that in a child, it must be the same in kind with that in his teacher. It is a grand system of duties, authoritatively addressed to our rational faculties, and enforced under the sanction of motives the most powerful and impressive that can be conceived; all of which, however, must be by us distinctly perceived and recognized before an enlightened obedience can be rendered. There is but one way, then, by which religion can be taught to rational creatures. They must know, or, in other words, *understand*.

\* Parochial and Week-day Teachers will find much success, in pursuing this mode of teaching, by the use of "*First Step to Real Knowledge*," with the "*Second, Third Steps*," in their order, which have been composed *specially for this useful and easy method of teaching the child to read.*

duty, and then have a clear and rational view of the sanctions by which that duty is enforced. Now, both nature and revelation show, that the first duty of every intelligent being is, to "acquaint himself with God;" to inquire into the nature of the relations in which he stands to him, and to know what are the particular duties which, in his special circumstances, spring out of these relations. Of these things the Bible, and the Bible alone, gives us information; and hence it is, that, without a clear knowledge of *the truths* of the Bible, there can be no religion. But it is evident, that it is the *truths* of the Bible, and not the *words* only of the Bible, which children should be taught; and it is a matter of comparatively little moment by what means these truths are taught, whether by Catechisms or otherwise, provided they be really taught in such a manner as to be understood and comprehended with the same precision with which children know and understand the common matters of ordinary life. This is evidently the first step then in the progress of teaching religion; and it is manifest that, till this object has been attained, with respect to the simple truths of the Bible, it is in vain to proceed farther. We may harass, and distract, and weaken a child's mind by making him repeat words from the Bible or Catechisms, which *contain* the doctrines of Christianity; but unless he understands them, they are, and must ever be, powerless and inefficient. The mere repeating of these is not the communicating to him of any one of the *truths* of the Bible, and it is not of course advancing him one single step in religious knowledge.

Now, what is the fact when we come to inves-



investigate the matter in ordinary practice?—How do we find children, in general, taught Religion?—They learn to repeat their Catechisms:—Very right. But do they, after they have done so, know the meaning of that which they have repeated? Are sufficient pains taken that they shall learn to repeat nothing but what they clearly understand? In short, the question is, Are they, or are they not, taught the *truths* of the Bible?—Is it not a melancholy fact, that thousands of children are able to repeat their catechisms from beginning to end, who yet know nothing about them but the words? and, after all the labour and pains which have been taken to make them learn, and the self-denial which they have exercised in committing mere words, they are yet almost as ignorant of the truths of the Bible as they were when they began. The extent of this evil, could we see it in its present and succeeding effects, would almost make us pronounce it a species of impiety. The answers given by a child, taught in this manner, to the consecutive question, "Who made you?" "Who restrains you?" and. "Who supports you?" would, in many instances, strike a pious Christian with a species of horror, to think that he had been teaching a child ignorantly and lightly to sport with names which ought at all times, and by every creature, to be used with profound reverence and deep humility.

In the reading and repeating of Scripture, as well as in the learning of Catechisms, a similar ignorance, arising, however, in a great measure, from *the former evil*, also takes place. When children have read a portion of Scripture, and shut the books, how seldom do we find them capable

giving an intelligent account of what they have read? And particularly, after having learned to repeat a whole chapter, or a whole book, were we to investigate the matter, we would in general find, that their acquaintance with the *truths* they have repeated is exceedingly small, and their *practical knowledge*, in most instances, really nothing. Where then, we would ask, is there in all this any thing like a foundation upon which we shall ever be able to build "practical godliness?" Where is there any thing like a knowledge, far less a conviction, of sin and misery, or that illumination of mind in the knowledge of Christ by which alone the heart can be affected, and the will renewed?—All these must be perceived by the understanding before the Spirit of God will render them efficacious. He always works in the soul by means of the word; and though these truths are too often before the mind without affecting the heart, yet they never can reach the heart till they have previously been present to the understanding. The teacher, then, who attempts to get access to the heart, and to communicate religion to a child, by merely storing the memory, to the exclusion of the understanding, most lamentably mistakes the way of improvement, as well as the nature of that religion which God requires even in a child; and though we dare not affirm, that children who are taught to repeat words which they do not understand, had better not have been taught at all, yet, in the spirit, and even in the words of the Apostle, we may confidently say, that it is better that a child should " *speak five words with the understanding, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue,*"

The Author has long considered this baneful, heartless, and absurd, conduct in the treatment of children, as one of the most subtle and destructive delusions of Satan, in retarding the spread of true religion and evangelical truth: And he has often lamented to see Christians,—pious, and in other respects judicious Christians,—not perhaps advocating, but still practising and excusing this mode of communicating religious knowledge, on the idea, that children would *afterwards remember* and understand what they now learn. “Store the memory *now*,” say they, “and the children will get the benefit of these truths afterwards when they are understood.” But why should not the child understand them *now*? Why should he not get the benefit of these glorious and important truths *now*? Why should a child be kept in ignorance of God, and the great concerns of religion and eternity, upon a mere chance, that these truths shall *hereafter* be remembered and digested? But, even granting that the truths might afterwards be remembered,—Which we have already shown is not very probable,—have they considered the consequences to which their conclusion leads them? Do they, or do they not, consider this knowledge, which they are for indefinitely postponing, as necessary to salvation? If it be not, why teach the children at all? But if it be, who, with a heart strung with the common chords of humanity, can, to save themselves a little more trouble, suspend the eternal welfare of a soul upon such a far distant and very uncertain contingency? Can they, *instead of exercising a little more pains and patience in pointing out the way of salvation to the children in a manner which they can understand,*

oughtlessly content themselves with sowing seed on the wayside, where they know it cannot take root; while they have the solemn declaration of our Lord himself, that they who "hear the word, and understand it not," have it literally *taken away from them* by Satan. Our Lord, indeed, in telling this class first in the parable, distinctly indicates, that such persons are the most hopeless of the other classes of gospel hearers. We have already satisfactorily proved, what indeed experience every day testifies, that not one truth in a thousand thus communicated is ever afterwards remembered; and, even when remembered, it must be *understood* before fruit can be produced.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *Means for Removing the Evils complained of in the Religious Instruction of the Young.*

THE origin of the evils complained of having now thus traced, the remedy becomes obvious. It consists in going back to the point where the character first diverged, and following up the line pointed out by nature and the child as the pathway of the judgment. There must now be no interposition given to specious-ignorance, superficial learning, or the mere mechanical repetition of words. The teacher must now at last consider himself as the instructor of rational and immortal beings, and pursue his course of tuition according-

ly. He must endeavour to make the children master of every idea as they proceed; and be contented rather to communicate one or two truths concerning God and salvation to the understanding, than to hear them repeat chapters and questions, to which he is conscious they attach no specific ideas. In short, he must give diligent heed that their understanding shall always keep pace with, if it do not precede, the memory; and that every truth which he communicates be rationally received, and thoroughly understood.

To many this will at once, and without hesitation, be pronounced impossible. We sincerely sympathize for them, though not with them in this feeling; but we know its depth, as well as its extent, and are not alarmed for the issue.—*It is not impossible.*—The truths which the children will thus acquire may, indeed, for some time be *few*, but surely it does not follow that there shall be *none*. The children have not yet been so abused by the mode of their instruction as to be *deprived* of their rational powers! They are yet capable of understanding, and remembering, and delivering your messages to their parents about their secular concerns, or the civil matters of the school; and why not take advantage of the same capacity, and understanding, and memory for the things of religion and eternity? You have a message to them from God; why not deliver it to them in their own language? Why conceal it under words which they do not understand? Why transact your *own* business with them in one language, and the *business of your Master* in another?—It is not impossible; then, although it may for some time be difficult: but it shall be the business of this chapter to

show to persons in different circumstances how it may, to each of them, be made as easy as possible.

To those who have the uncontrolled management of a Sabbath School, there should in this case be no half measures. We know, for we have repeatedly witnessed the circumstance, and have heard of it in many more cases, that the return to the rational system will be hailed by the children as life from the dead. Thousands, and tens of thousands, are at this moment groaning under this dead weight of cold and heartless, as well as senseless and absurd management, who, after one month's emancipation, would show a new life and a new energy in all their exercises, of which they, or their teachers, can at this moment form no conception. If they have long been accustomed to repeat, what the teacher has reason to believe they did not understand, let the reformation begin here. Cause them to abstain in the mean time,—perhaps for some weeks,—from learning by memory, and prescribe to them a passage of scripture to read, and to understand; with a promise, that they who do so, and only they, shall be permitted to repeat it as a reward for their diligence. When they have been catechised upon the passage and have given the explanations, in the manner which will afterwards be explained and exemplified, they ought then to have their attention called to the lessons. These will not, perhaps, for a few weeks, be properly understood; but the teacher should point out and explain at least two or three each night from the passage, that they may perceive their use as well as their value. These exercises *should in general be confined either to the narrative part of the New or Old Testament, always*

preferring the New, or to the miracles or parables of our Lord, which are certainly of great importance. These being easiest understood by the children, ought first to be gone over, before the more abstract and didactic parts of the Scriptures are brought before them.

With respect to the Shorter Catechism, the evil here treated of has come to its greatest height. Any person who begins to teach on the plan here recommended, will find it a severe trial of patience to make those children who have long before learned to *repeat* this excellent compendium, now *understand* it. His success would be much greater with one who had never learned it, than with another who can repeat the whole. In the one case, the child has been so long habituated to repeat the words, without attaching any idea to them, that he finds himself unable to penetrate the soil which he has trodden to hardness; while, in the other case, the teacher has but to catechise the child in the ordinary manner, and having explained the terms piece by piece, so soon as these are understood, the whole answer begins to appear in its connexion. Having in this way previously got at the *meaning* of the answer, the child will learn it in a much shorter time, and retain it on the memory much more tenaciously than in the other case; with this additional advantage, that the doctrines therein taught being once thoroughly understood and digested, become so interwoven with his thoughts, as to be ready at all times to come to the aid of the mind and heart when they are wanted. *But this can never be the case where the doctrines contained in the questions or verses are not understood.*

all who have considered the subject, it must  
dent, that the Shorter Catechism is too hard  
r for children's learning in the early stages  
r religious instruction. It is too strong meat  
e lambs of Christ's flock ; which by injudi-  
surfeiting, destroys their appetite for all know-  
and even unfits them for afterwards benefi-  
y the great truths which its pages contain.  
ght, therefore, to be left to the latter stages of  
education, when they will be more able to  
ve its beauties and appreciate its value. The  
er should, therefore, adopt a course of train-  
y means of some other catechism, choosing  
hich the children have not yet learned, and  
i will give sufficient scope to the teacher in  
g extemporaneous questions ;—his great ob-  
lways being, to see that the children upon no  
nt pass from a question till it be thoroughly  
stood. For this purpose the Initiatory Cate-  
is, which have been formed on the principles  
ecommended, may with propriety be adopted,  
ng the best of any yet before the public, for  
ising the minds of children. The mode of  
these will be afterwards described.

When a teacher is under the control of others,  
ied down to a task-roll, or when, from some  
cause he finds that it would be imprudent  
ve the series of exercises in which he is at  
it engaged, he ought weekly to return upon  
asks of the last, or even of the two or three  
r weeks, in order that the children may have  
portunity of taking a more comprehensive  
of the passage as a whole. They will by  
means be able to give a much more distinct  
nt of the circumstances related, and of the



doctrines or duties taught in them. If the Shorter Catechism be part of the exercises, he ought to use it in the manner of the "Key," as he will find described in another place; taking care, that as far as possible, the children become acquainted with the truths and doctrines of that book, as well as with the words which contain them. All these changes will be most difficult at first; but every successive step will clear the way, and make those which follow comparatively easy.

When a School is to commence anew, or when children come for instruction for the first time, the teacher's duty will be both more pleasant and successful; and the following pages will accordingly be so arranged as to point out the order in which their exercises in that case should be carried on, and the manner of conducting each, so that it may be most easy and most useful.

We have thus endeavoured to lay open that evil in the Religious Instruction of the Young, the consequences of which have been so very detrimental, and in many cases even destructive, of vital religion in this country: and have also pointed out generally in what the remedy consists. The application of this remedy, as we have just shown, must be proceeded in according to circumstances; but that any, who are by the foregoing investigation convinced of the evil, shall persevere in it, is what we cannot for a moment suppose. The reform may perhaps be *gradual*, but its commencement should be *immediate*.

In the following chapters, accordingly, we shall *proceed* to develope that mode of teaching the *truths* of Scripture, commonly called the "**LESSON SYSTEM**," which may be adopted in whole or

in part, as the cases of children or Schools may suggest, or as circumstances may render advisable. Some of the chapters will necessarily be employed in removing difficulties, or answering objections, as we proceed; but, generally, we shall endeavour to carry forward the Parent or Teacher successively through those steps in the Religious Instruction of a child, which experience and reason point out as the most successful, and on which we have most reason to expect the influences of the Spirit, and the blessing of God, without which all teaching is in vain.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *On the Nature and Importance of Catechising Children, and its use in Expanding and Strengthening the Mind.*

THERE is no method yet discovered, so useful and important in the instruction of children, as the practice of making them answer questions. This truth is admitted by all, and very generally acted upon; and yet few comparatively seem to understand that instrument which they employ with so much power and advantage. This is the more to be regretted, as ignorance of the principles which render catechising so very beneficial, has allowed many pernicious practical errors to become general;—errors which would have been instantly detected and abandoned, had its nature been properly known. A little attention, then to this subject,

previously to our entering upon the more practical part of this treatise, will be useful.

When we ourselves are asked a question, the effect instantly produced is the arrestment of our attention to the subject ; and, before an answer can be given, an extensive and complicated series of mental operations becomes necessary. The attention is first called to the question proposed, of the nature and bearing of which the mind immediately takes cognizance. It observes in succession the different steps by which the interrogatory advances, marks distinctly their connexion with each other, and the whole with the final close, or the main object of the question ; and all this takes place before the mind can combine the various parts of the interrogatory together, for the purpose of preparing an answer. That all this must be performed by the mind is evident from this circumstance, that if any one of the steps in the interrogatory has been lost, or the mind has failed to perceive its connexion with the others, or with the main object of the question, uncertainty as to the meaning is the consequence, the question is not understood, and of course, no answer can either be prepared or given ;—and the only thing which in such a case can be done, is to have the question repeated or explained. When the question is understood, another series of operations begins : The mind calls in the aid of the memory ; and by recollecting, contrasting, comparing, and finally adjusting its materials, proceeds either to concoct an answer, or to decide upon its inability to do so. *When, however, the answer is within its reach, and has, in this manner, been prepared, an entirely new series of operations then commences, of a nature*

equally complicated, and requiring, perhaps, as much mental energy as any of the former. These consist in the arranging of the ideas, the selecting from among many thousands of words such only as will best suit the purpose; and finally, after having placed them in due order, in the clothing of the ideas with correct and appropriate language.

On account of the amazing rapidity of thought, we cannot, it is true, always at the time recognise distinctly all these several successive operations of the mind; but as we know that it can occupy itself with only one subject or idea at a time, it follows from the very nature of the thing, that all this which we have described, must necessarily take place, before an answer can be prepared and returned to any one question.

Now, when we take these circumstances into connexion with the well known truth, that the strength and extension of the reasoning faculties depend almost entirely upon their exercise, and observe how every question asked at, and answered by a child, forces upon it such an extensive and complicated series of mental operations, we at once discover the grand secret of this success in catechising, and clearly perceive at the same time in what its efficiency consists. It accounts also for that undisguised pleasure which children experience in catechetical exercises properly conducted, by letting us see how the mind, which in them is equally restless and averse to inactivity as their physical organs, is so agreeably exercised; but above all, it shows in what manner these catechetical exercises enlarge and strengthen the mental capacities, by gradually producing a clearer perception of truth, and thus giving at length

acuteness and energy to every voluntary operation of thought, when exerted upon almost any subject.

A knowledge of this principle, it must be evident, is of the greatest practical utility, and will enable us to adopt or reject any new experiments in education, with much greater safety than we could otherwise do. It will also suggest to us the propriety of abandoning or correcting those methods, the insufficiency of which, though observed and deplored, might yet have been attributed either to inadequacy on the part of the teacher, or to inattention or want of capacity on that of the children; and, in general, it will qualify us to perceive and avoid whatever *prevents, interrupts, or supersedes* that exercise of mind which we have shown to be requisite, and upon which almost all the good depends. Thus, for example, if, when a child is asked a question, one of his companions *prevents* this exercise of mind by prompting him what to answer, we at once discover the reason of this being an evil;—When a child is internally labouring for an answer, and we, for want of time or some other reason, *interrupt* the mental process, by giving him the answer which he himself was striving to attain, we not only perceive this also to be an error, but we can even describe its magnitude; and more particularly still, when we altogether *supersede* the necessity of such an exercise of mind, by imparting to the child a set form of words with which to return his answers, we instantly see that this is pernicious, and can give a reason for its being so; and *are enabled*, at the same time, to adopt such *correctives as are within our reach, to remove the evil, or at least to lessen it.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

*On the Nature and Use of Catechisms, and the difference between learning a Catechism, and being catechised.*

THE reader will be prepared, in some measure, by the observation at the end of the last chapter, for a few remarks on the nature of *Catechisms*, which have too frequently been confounded with *catechising*; and from what has been stated above, he will at once acknowledge, that however useful they may be,—and useful they certainly are,—yet their usefulness is not at all or at least very little, connected with catechetical exercises, properly so called. They have another and very different office to perform in the education of the child;—an office which, though necessary to *prepare* the child for the catechetical exercise, does not form a *part* of it, and must neither be confounded with it, nor substituted in its place.

It must be evident, that catechising is not so much designed to *communicate* truth for the first time, as it is to give a clearer and more extensive view of it after it has once been communicated, and to rivet it still more firmly upon the memory. When any one asks me a question, he takes it for granted that I am already possessed of the knowledge necessary to give him an answer; or, at least that there are in my mind sufficient materials, from which I shall be able of myself to compound it; but he never supposes that by merely asking the question he has done any thing towards putting me in possession of the answer. He may, no

doubt, by this means, call my attention to the subject, and prepare my mind for information upon it; but still, the mere asking of the question neither gives me the information, nor extends the limits of my former knowledge.

The truths themselves, then, upon which the child is catechised, must, in some way or other, be previously communicated before this exercise can begin; and if the degrees of knowledge be equal in other respects, it is evidently to the child a matter of comparative indifference, whether it has been imparted verbally, or by means of a text-book. In either case, the knowledge being in the mind, the catechetical exercise will go forward equally well, whether it has been received by him in the one way or in the other. But it is a matter of great importance, in saving the time of the teacher, that there should be some intermediate link, or text-book, between him and the scholar, that the latter may be able to prepare his lessons when he is at home, or absent from his teacher, as well as when he is present. Now this is the office which the Catechism should, and does supply. It places the means of knowledge within the reach of the child, and supplies the materials which must afterwards be used for strengthening the mind, giving a clearer perception of the truths, and fixing them more deeply and firmly upon the memory.

This will be more clearly understood by an example.—When we wish to teach a child a doctrine contained in the Shorter Catechism,—suppose, for instance, the doctrine of Effectual Calling,—we may either give the information verbally, or we may direct him to the question in which he

will find it. Now, it is obvious, that my verbal instructions on the subject, or his learning the answer, have nothing to do with, and include none of the leading characteristics of catechising.—It is a necessary preparative for it, however; and after it has been communicated, when I again ask him, “What is Effectual Calling?” He is prepared to give me an answer which, before I told him verbally, or before he learned it from his Catechism, could not have been done.

This, therefore, is obviously the point where the catechetical exercise must *begin*;—the fundamental principle of which, as has been shown, is, that the answer to every question be searched for by the child himself. Here he has, by learning the words, the materials from which his answers may be compounded; the culling of which is one of the best possible means of making them understood, both in themselves and in their connexion with each other. This will at once appear, were we for a moment to attend to the operations of mind which immediately take place in a child, upon being successfully asked, “Whose work is Effectual Calling?” “Of what does the Spirit convince us?” “What does the Spirit do to our minds?” “What is renewed?” &c.

It is of importance also, at this point, for us to take notice of the difference between *reading* and *understanding* a proposition, and merely learning to *repeat* it, that we may the better appreciate the decided superiority of at once laying hold of the *idea*, without at all encumbering ourselves in the first instance with the *words*. This will be plain from the circumstances supposed:—for if the child has received his knowledge of the doctrine from



me *verbally*, or without a set form of words, and if I were in that case to ask him, "What is Effectual Calling?" the question would necessarily lead to a long train of mental exercises, of the nature formerly described, for the purpose of giving the several parts of the answer in his *own words*, as he formerly *understood* them, or can now remember them. His account of the doctrine would perhaps be much less extensive in its various parts; but what of it was given would be *well understood*. But if, as is commonly the case, the child has learned the *words* of the Catechism, and now, on being asked the same question, he merely *repeats them*, it must appear to all, that, even supposing the words repeated to be thoroughly understood, there is here no such mental exercise required as was in the former case, and by consequence, the same benefit cannot be received. This, it will be observed, is taking the case in its most favourable light, by supposing that the words in the answer have been understood; but the case becomes much stronger the moment we suppose, what commonly happens, that the words have been committed to memory without being properly, if at all, understood. In this case, it is manifest, that the mere mechanical repetition does nothing, but helps to deceive the teacher who does understand the words, by inducing him to believe that the child who so correctly repeats them must, like himself, also understand them. By attention to this single circumstance, we will at once be able, not only to appreciate the value of catechetical exercises, but *at the same time*, to perceive the use, and the only use which ought to be made of catechisms where the words of the answers are given at length;—

They are useful,—very useful *préparatives* for catechetical exercises,—but they form no part of them; and the teacher who attempts to use them without a Key, or at least who neglects to use them in the manner of a Key, will find himself most grievously disappointed, when he comes at last to collect together the fruits of his labour: And we would most earnestly advise those of our readers to whom this remark may more particularly apply, while there yet remains some part of their season of usefulness behind, that they would now seriously consider this subject; and if they can perceive any truth in the foregoing remarks, and find that they accord with their own experience, that they would now improve what time remains, in establishing a better system, in the hope, or rather in the assurance, of more complete success.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### *On the Principles of First Teaching, and its Difficulties.*

IN teaching very young children, of four or five years of age, there are two distinct objects which a teacher ought to keep constantly in view, and which he should endeavour to make subservient to each other. The one is the communication of real knowledge to the child; and the other, and the principal one at this particular period of his labours, is *the preparing and strengthening of the child's mind, by proper exercise, for those additional sup-*

plies of information, which it will soon be requisite to communicate.

As to the first, or the communication of religious knowledge to the child, it must be obvious that, till the child be capable of exercising his mind in the classifying and combining of simple objects, there can be but little progress made in this department. The first attempts will necessarily be the most difficult, and will require the greatest exercise of patience and labour, on the part both of teacher and child. But as every difficulty in this exercise which is overcome, is in one sense overcome for ever, it is equally certain, that these obstructions will lessen at every step, and the acquisition of any one idea regarding any truth, will prepare the way for the reception of many more.

As to the second object, that of exercising and strengthening the mind of the child, it should be considered at this period by the teacher as of the greatest importance, and should, for some time at least, be more steadily kept in view than the other, as being the means of bringing him much sooner even to the accomplishment of the first object above alluded to. From what has been advanced in the preceding chapters, it is evident, that no way is yet known so well adapted to attain both these objects as catechetical exercises, or cross-questioning the child upon truths which the teacher has verbally communicated, or which the child has previously learned from a Catechism. But there is a difficulty in *commencing* such a system, of which some who attempt it may not be aware. Children *who have long* been in the habit of repeating set *forms of words*, in answer to questions, are *commonly much* at a loss when an extemporaneous

question, about religion or their Catechisms, is first asked at them. This difficulty, however, must be conquered; but it should always be done by gentleness and perseverance; by making the children again and again repeat their answers, and endeavouring, as much as possible, to vary and simplify the extemporaneous questions formed from them; and particularly, in showing the connexion between the questions asked, and the words which he has repeated.

When this first obstruction appears to be more difficult to remove than was expected, and does not readily give way to the repeated and varied cross-interrogatories of the teacher, he must take another course, and endeavour to bring the common sense of the child into exercise, till he can make it subservient to his purpose. To accomplish this, he should now go wide of his subject, and appear to drop it, that the child also may lose sight both of his lesson and his school, and, if possible, retain no idea that he is for the time under the catechetical influence of any one. The teacher must, in a free and familiar manner, ask him some trifling questions about his family, his clothes, his companions, or his play,—things with which the common sense and experience of the child are familiar; and from this point the catechetical exercise must now take its rise. For example, were a teacher, whose questions on the words repeated had uniformly been answered by a vacant stare, to ask the same child in an easy way, “Who made this jacket, or frock, or pelisse?”—“Of what is it made?”—“For whom did Mr. — make it?”—“Who gave him the cloth to make it?”—“Of what is this cap made?”—“Who made the world?”—“Who made all

things?"—"Of what did God make all these things?"—"Who made you?" &c.—he will be able very soon, and in a very agreeable manner, to break down this first great obstruction to mental exertion upon those topics, which the mere repeating of words always tends to raise and strengthen. A few such trials will soon let the child into the pleasing secret, that he has a mind capable of searching, and comparing, and deciding for himself; and he will take increasing pleasure in its exercise. The meaning of the answers will, by every successive question, gradually begin to appear; first, in the small detached sentences which form the subject of the several questions, and then, by degrees, in their connexion with each other. These, in their turn, form the subjects of new questions and new combinations, each of which stimulates the mind to the important mental exercise of searching for a correct answer, which will ultimately be given in intelligible and appropriate language.

In pursuing this course, the teacher will find that the various elementary Catechisms in common use, are not all equally adapted to the accomplishment of his designs. Those Catechisms, which will soon perceive, suit his purpose best, in which each answer stands perfect in itself, and does not necessarily depend on the words of its question for the completion of its sense; and more particularly, and principally, those will be found most serviceable, where the words in the answers, which are to be repeated by the child as the foundation of catechetical exercises, are so chosen and arranged as to be easily, and without violence, broken into the smallest possible parts, or elements, from

the greatest number of extemporaneous questions may be drawn, and by means of which the greatest variety of combinations may be effected by the child. This gives the teacher a complete command of the child's mind, which he can direct to any, or every corner of his subject, in order to cull out the simple truths as they stand by themselves; or to combine, or classify, or separate them at pleasure; by which means he causes truth gradually to dawn upon the minds of the children, with a clearness, and a perspicuity, and a beauty, which, so far as we yet know, can never be attained in any other way.

This at once accounts for the general failure, as to the communication of real knowledge, of those admirable little Catechisms for children, composed by Watts, Wilson, Brown, &c.—men, the value of whose piety and talents were greatly enhanced by their endeavours in behalf of the young. They, no doubt, studied simplicity; but, at that time, they seem to have had no idea of this mode of teaching, which has of late begun to give a complete new turn to the whole system of juvenile education. We accordingly find, that their Catechisms, though valuable and simple, are but seldom understood by children; who, though they repeat the words fluently and correctly, are frequently unable to comprehend the doctrines which the words contain; and in regard to real knowledge, are often, even after they have learned and repeated the words, left nearly, if not altogether, as ignorant as before they began. This is a very painful fact; but it is of too common occurrence to be either disputed or denied. The two *Initiatory Catechisms*, on the other hand, which by

means of their Keys, are not only, in an uncommon degree, communicating a knowledge of the principles of religion, but are giving a life and an energy to young minds, of which children have generally been hitherto thought incapable, owe their success mainly to their minute adaptation to this important principle.

In commencing the mental culture of a child, then, we must follow nature, and proceed steadily upon this principle, which is evidently the most pleasant, and the most successful mode of teaching yet practised. As to its *success*, it is worthy of remark, that wherever a fair trial has been given, it has, after several years' experience, never yet been known to fail: and as to the *pleasure* with which its exercises are engaged in by the children, a few trials will be sufficient to show its decided superiority. These circumstances are mentioned here for the encouragement of such as might be deterred from pursuing this path of usefulness, from the apparent difficulties which necessarily occur at the commencement. But teachers will find, that by a little patience for a few lessons, their own delight in this duty will greatly exceed their trouble. For as soon as the children begin to feel the enjoyment derived from the exercise of their minds, and gradually acquire a facility in using them, the satisfaction which is thus conveyed, will become, both to teacher and child, a sufficient stimulus to exertion. The labours of the teacher change their character, and every following step is to both of them an advancement of improvement and pleasure.

## CHAPTER X.

*On the Lawfulness, or Propriety, of Teaching Religion by means of Catechisms.*

AT this stage of our inquiries, it may be proper to consider the validity of an objection which has been started, as to the lawfulness, or at least the propriety and expediency of teaching religion to children by means of Catechisms. This objection has been conscientiously made by some excellent and pious individuals; and as it involves a question of considerable importance, and immediately connected with our subject, we shall endeavour candidly to state the case, and dispassionately inquire into its merits.

As this opinion may, like most other plausible notions, be exhibited in such a manner as even to seem genuine truth, and yet, when closely examined through the medium of the practice which it occasions, will assume a very different aspect, we shall first state the opinion, then describe the practice, and from a full view of the matter, deduce our conclusion.

It is said, that children ought to be taught religion simply and purely from the word of God, and from it alone. That this is the only sure and safe ground upon which to proceed in the important and responsible duty of training children for eternity; that while we keep to the pure revelation of God's will, we are safe; but whenever we trust ourselves to the mere opinions of men, we are more or less involved in uncertainty and danger. From all this they conclude, that the Bible, and the Bi-



ble alone, should be used in the religious instruction of children.

Now, all this is really and substantially correct so long as we are left to put our own several interpretations upon the terms, "Word of God,"—"Revelation of God's Will,"—and the "Bible." And by these are meant only, the *truths and declarations of God's Will* which are contained in the Bible, we at once and unhesitatingly accord the sentiment, and would, without limitation or reservation, condemn any practice of a contrary character.

But the opinion, when explained by the practice of those who hold it, puts on a very different appearance. They take the Bible in its literal sense and though they do not by any means intend to designate by this term the leaves and board of the book, in the common and mercantile sense, the word "Bible," yet they consider that it is necessary, that the Bible, as it appears in our translation, should be the only text-book in teaching religion. They object to the use of any intermediate means. They deny both the necessity and propriety of using condensed views of divine truth because, being the work of man, they are liable to error, and are, on that account, in their opinion, dangerous. They will not allow any regular or systematic arrangement of Christian doctrine in the form of Catechisms; but leave the child to the use of their Bible, and the explanation of their teachers, to collect for themselves, as soon as they can, a system of Christianity, for the purpose of giving to their fellow men "a reason of hope that is in them."

Now all this has so much the appearance

truth, that it is really not very easy to detect and expose the error. It consists in requiring more from man, in this particular case, than it is ever possible to expect; and in not properly discriminating between the *truths* of Scripture, and the *words* by which they are conveyed. They say of every compendium of Christian doctrine,—the Shorter Catechism for instance,—“This is the work of man,—*therefore* we shall not teach it;”—but, when we come to inquire into the reason of such a decision, we find it resolves itself into this, that, though they can detect in its pages no truth—which is not borne out by Scripture, yet, as the expressions are not the same as those in the Bible, they may, of course, contain error, and *therefore* they should not be used.

But were this principle carried to its full length, it would exclude all teaching, preaching and even our common translation of the scriptures itself. Ministers, in their explanations of Scripture, and in pressing its truths and duties upon the hearts and consciences of their hearers, must clothe their exhortations in their own words; but if these be consistent with the declarations of the Bible, common usage, and Scripture itself, allow us to denominate even this, the “ministration of the Word of God.” Nay, our common translation of the Bible might be rejected upon the same principle, as we shall immediately show; and indeed, were the principle once adopted as correct, ministers would be confined to the mere reading of Scripture from their pulpits, without either explanation or preaching; and even then, the same principle would require that this should be done in the *original Greek and Hebrew*.

But the foundation of error lies still deeper than even this; and consists principally, in not properly distinguishing between the *truths* of Scripture, and the *language* used to express them.—God has been pleased by means of the original languages, to reveal to us certain *truths* through the medium of *words*, also inspired. These truths are in themselves infallible and unchangeable; and whenever we find any one of these *truths*, in whatever form, or in whatever language, in so far as that language gives us a correct picture of the original declaration of God, the declaration is still equally true, and equally infallible. It will be admitted by all, that the very same truth may be conveyed by two individuals in words entirely different, and in this manner there may, at first sight, be an apparent variety of meaning; but if the truth be precisely the same in both sentences, it would evidently be absurd to aver, that it was altered, because the words which contained it were different in the one case, from those used in the other.

“In Adam all die;”—So says our Bible; and the Greek original gives the very same truth, though in other words. In so far, therefore, as our translation gives a correct idea of what God there revealed, we have the stamp of infallibility impressed on this *truth*, although it would be incorrect to say so of the words of our own, or of any *translation*. Let us clothe this idea in any form of language we please, if the *truth* be but purely conveyed to our minds, it is still a part and portion of the revelation made to us by God, and must in whatever form it appears, be received and used *by us with submission and reverence*. Here then

lies the error which we have been combating.—It consists in refusing, or denying, the substantial *truths* of God, because they have been separated from the Bible; or, in other words, because the doctrines of Scripture, and certain portions of the revelation of God's will, have been, for important purposes, *arranged* by men in a certain order and form, and are known by a different name,—therefore they in effect conclude, that these *truths* have changed their nature, and are now no longer to be considered the declarations of God, but the mere unauthenticated opinions of men.—The fallacy of this conclusion, when thus stated, needs no comment; and therefore, we are warranted to conclude, that, in so far as Catechisms, and other elementary books, can be shown to be exclusively founded upon Scripture, and contain only the pure and unadulterated *truths* of God which are there revealed, it is quite incorrect to affirm, that these are, in any sense, merely the opinions of men, or are not to be taught, because they do not convey to us a portion of the will of God.

But the fallacy of the whole principle is evident even from the practice which is uniformly founded upon it. The children are, by the holders of this opinion, taught from their Bibles,—but they are not left alone to their Bibles. They are directed to particular portions of Scripture, for particular duties and particular doctrines; these verses are explained by the teacher, who must point out to their young minds how a doctrine is supported by particular verses; how, and by whom this duty is to be performed, and for what reason that evil is to be avoided. All this must be done verbally *by the teacher*,—and this is just what is done by

means of the Catechisms; with this very material difference however in their favour, that in the Catechisms, these truths have, after much study and labour, been stated and arranged in a simple and natural order, by individuals whose piety and zeal rendered them peculiarly fitted for the duty; whereas, by this principle which we are noticing, the numerous advantages of all this preliminary labour is lost and discarded as useless, and a new and similar work must be commenced every time that a new pupil is to be taught the duties and the doctrines of the gospel. The inconvenience and positive loss to the children by such a procedure, must at once be evident; and as the principle has no foundation in the word of God, and is in fact impracticable in the present state of society, we are warranted in saying, that those who have it in their power to use those helps which are every day exhibiting their usefulness among the lambs of Christ's flock, and yet neglect to do so, are neither doing justice to themselves, to their children, nor to the cause which they are endeavouring to support.

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## CHAPTER XI.

*Methods which should be followed in Teaching  
First Catechisms to very Young Children.*

**WHATEVER** text-book be used in the early cultivation of a child's mind, it must never be forgot-

ten, that it is the *cross interrogatories* upon what he repeats or reads, which can alone be efficient; and as the Initiatory Catechisms are certainly better adapted to this principle than any other we have yet seen, we shall make use of them in the following illustrations.

The first thing which a teacher should do with a young child, is to give him some idea of the powers of mind which he possesses, and, at the same time, to exercise him in adapting his words to the changes of language necessary in giving his answers. The teacher should make the child repeat a sentence, or part of a sentence, from one of the answers, and by cross-questioning him, force upon him an exercise both of mind and language which is not only important, but which will soon become easy and pleasant. Suppose for example, he should say, from the First Initiatory Catechism, "God at first made all things of nothing;" the cross interrogatories, "Who did this?" or, "What did God make?" or, "When did God make all things?" or, "Of what did God at first make all things?" would throw him back upon the words which he has repeated, the meaning of which he is compelled to understand, before he can do what is required of him. And even when he does know the meaning of the whole sentence, he has still to select and to pick out from it that particular portion from which he is to form his answer, arrange it in his mind, and clothe it in language of his own, in many instances quite different from that which he has heard from his teacher, or which he sees in his book.

It is here worthy of remark, that if this exercise be conducted in the spirit of the foregoing observa-

tions, the teacher will save himself and the child much labour and uneasiness afterwards; but if there be any thing like superficiality, or glossing over the matter, or procuring answers from the child for the sake of exhibition or effect, he is not only labouring in vain, but is actually weakening the principles which it is his duty and interest to foster and strengthen. Let every parent or teacher then who has it in his power, never pass from an answer, or at least from a section, till he be convinced that the child understands it. Let him rather dwell upon the first section of the little Catechism above referred to for a month; but let him secure his object before he proceeds farther. In doing so, he is securing the more speedy understanding of the second; but if he advance upon false ground, he will just have to come back again, and find at last that he has lost much, and gained nothing by his precipitation.

When the questions in the first section are individually learned, and are well understood by the children, the connecting exercise in the Key to the First Initiatory Catechism will point out to a teacher how he is now to proceed. This is by combining and varying the questions here and there according to his own pleasure, by which he not only rivets the whole more strongly upon the mind, but, by this means he can at once detect any deficiency among the children in the understanding of their several truths; who, as just mentioned should be able readily to answer every question in, or connected with, the first section, before proceeding to the second; and in both first and second, before proceeding to the third; and so on *with the others*; the teacher making sure, at every

advance, that he leaves no false or hollow ground behind him.

This method of proceeding will to some, perhaps, appear to be very improper and unreasonable. They may very naturally think, that by persevering in such a course, the child's improvement and education must be materially checked, or altogether brought to a stand. But a little reflection will show, that the very reverse of this is the case. A child may be long in learning the alphabet, but he can never read till the alphabet be learned; and were a teacher to distract his attention by the combination of the letters, while he was yet puzzled about their form, he would find, upon the law of simplicity, that he was not advancing, but materially retarding his main object. A child must, in the same manner, learn the multiplication table before he enters upon the practice of multiplication; but if this table be neglected, or imperfectly learned, he will find, that more time will, on this account, be lost in one month, than would at first, by a proper persevering application to it, singly and alone, have been necessary to commit it perfectly to memory. And, after all, there has been nothing gained in return. The table must still be learned if he is to proceed in his education; and he then finds, that by this false step at the beginning, his improvement has been impeded, his time lost, and the table, when at last learned, will, besides his loss of time, cost him more pains and trouble than would have been the case with one united and continued effort persevered in at the commencement. Just so is it with a child's knowledge of any object, provided always that it lie within the range of his *faculties*. In such a case, it is certain, that the de-



lay does not arise so much from the abstruseness of the truths taught in the section, as from want of capacity, or sufficient power of mind in the child, as yet properly to comprehend them. If, then, the mind be exercised *only upon two or three* specified objects, this comprehension and understanding of them will gradually be effected; and when once attained, it is an attainment of mental strength, which, being now acquired by means of the exercises on the first section, will be carried forward more successfully to combat with the difficulties which may be found in the second. But if this mental strength had not been gained, or, in other words, had the child passed from the first section before he was able to understand it, the same imbecility would have followed him to the second and third,—all of which would, of course, be equally dark and incomprehensible. But the mental strength necessary will at last perhaps be acquired even in this way; and the reader is requested to observe what follows. The *previous* sections are not yet understood, and of course must be returned to; in other words, the child must just *begin again*, and learn the first and other sections with the understanding, which he ought not at first to have left till that had been accomplished.

This sure and solid manner of laying the foundation of knowledge in a child, will in experience be found to be the true one. A short-sighted impatience on the part of the parent or teacher is what is most to be dreaded; and the previous practice of hurrying children forward in the dark, will too often countenance and encourage a departure *from the principle*. But of this we are assured, *that if a parent or teacher would but fairly make*

the experiment, and at the end of one or two years compare the fruits of his labour in his children, he will find them to possess, not merely an increased capacity of acquiring knowledge, but he will find in them an actual *possession* of real knowledge, much greater in extent, and infinitely superior in quality, than is, or can be found, in those children who have been hurried forward from book to book, without consideration, and without understanding or reflecting on what they have been taught.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### *On the Expediency of Employing Young Persons to Teach First Catechisms.*

THERE is one great obstacle to the thorough teaching of very young children, which, though it does not apply to families, will sometimes be severely felt in Sabbath Schools, and to which we will very shortly advert. To benefit young children in the manner described in the last chapter, there must be much individual teaching; that is, there should be only three, four, or at most six children at one time taught by one person. This is occasioned by the necessity of making this kind of teaching almost altogether conversational, and the necessity of keeping up the attention of each child during the whole exercise. When this is done, the effect *on the children* is very remarkable; and they will continue, without the least indications of wear-

ness or languor, for an hour, an hour and a half, or even two hours at a time. Now, so long as the interest and their attention can be kept up, the teaching should be continued; and it should not stop till the teacher perceive the ardour of the children beginning to cool, when there is an evident danger of languor succeeding. This is the point at which to desist;—but up to this period there is good doing.

The teacher of a school, however, is not to be expected to do all this, and indeed cannot;—and yet it is of very great importance that it should be done, both for the sake of the children themselves, and for the prosperity and success of the school, when these same children shall have joined the higher classes. Assistants, therefore, ought to be procured; who, in the corners of the school-room, may, without interrupting the teacher, proceed, in an under tone of voice, to catechise three, four, or six of the children, during the greater part of the evening. The teacher will, at first perhaps, find this uncomfortable; but such a feeling, we know from the experience of many, will soon wear off.

Were the objection made as to the want of assistants, we would recommend the teacher to have his eye upon some of the most pious and promising of the older scholars, particularly those who, on account of their age, are likely soon to leave the school, and if possible, to form a class for the purpose of training them for this labour of love. The Key to the First Initiatory Catechism renders this duty easy to any one of ordinary capacity; and a few lessons, before the school commences, or after it dismisses, would be sufficient to qualify them for it. Young people of fourteen or sixteen years

age,—we have seen very successful teachers younger than this,—will soon be as able to keep the attention, and to exercise the minds of children, as the teacher himself,—and their improvement in the exercise will be much greater in this, than it can be in any other way.

Much prudence and circumspection, however, will be requisite on the part of a teacher in pursuing this very delicate, though very important part of his duty. His choice should be made a subject of mature deliberation and prayer,—and ought to be regulated by the piety and sedate behaviour of the children rather than by conspicuous talent, or forwardness of conduct, lest his choice might in any instance bring discredit on those truths which the young persons were called on to teach. This discrimination in selecting assistants, we would urge as a matter of *expediency*, though we should not, and indeed cannot make it with any teacher a matter of conscience. He should regulate himself wisely according to circumstances, and always remember, that though his choice may in every case perhaps be *lawful*, yet it may at the same time, be *inexpedient*.

While, however, teachers on the one hand ought to be scrupulous as to their choice of such agents, their brethren on the other hand, ought to be very charitable in judging, both of their motives, and of the objects of their choice. They ought to consider, that it is altogether a question of expediency, and not of lawfulness, and therefore, every one is in some measure left to judge of the circumstances in his own case, and to act according to his views of duty. And while we would urge the teacher to weigh well the remarks and objections of his

posing brethren, we would earnestly recommend these, on the other hand, to beware of cherishing any hostile feeling towards him, although their remarks and objections should fail to carry conviction, or to alter his views and conduct. Nay, we would in such a case be inclined to change sides, and to say, that the path of duty lay with *him*, and the proof of the inexpediency with his *opponents*. Let them consider what answer they would make to the following arguments, which we could conceive a teacher in such a case to bring forward. He might say, "What would you have me to do? Shall these young children, whose parents cannot or will not teach them, be allowed during the spring time of life,—the most important part by far of their mental year,—to be waste, and to remain in ignorance of God and eternity, till some more convenient season,—a season for which death will not wait, and which, to many, may never arrive? The knowledge of the gospel is their only chance of escaping from hell, and gaining heaven; these young teachers are the only instruments which God in his providence gives me the opportunity of employing; and if they are prevented, the work must stand still. They are young;—True:—they are inexperienced;—It cannot be denied:—they are perhaps thoughtless and giddy;—out of my sight perhaps they are so:—But the parents of the children whom they teach are *ignorant*, and *profligate*, and *wicked*; yet I could not, and dare not presume to prevent *them* on that account from teaching their children, if they were so inclined; nor can I, nor should I, because they are what you say, prevent these young people, who are willing to engage in this labour

of love, from supplying their parents' lack of duty. I would consider it right in them to teach their little brothers and sisters at home; and I cannot think it wrong, when they are willing, to employ them here, in doing the same thing to their companions or friends."

If such arguments should be used, we confess we cannot see how they could easily be met. At all events, teachers ought not to have their hands weakened, because they "follow not with us" in this particular matter. The children, moreover, in teaching that catechism, are, by means of the Key, precluded from the possibility of teaching error:—they may do much good, and they can scarcely do any harm. We therefore ought, like the Apostle Paul, when the gospel was preached even by envious and hypocritical men out of strife and contention, to rejoice that even by these children, divine truth is disseminated in the world. A little drinking in of the same spirit, should, we humbly think, at once drown all uncharitable feelings, and even opposition, to such a beneficial course.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

*A general Outline of the plan of Religious Instruction, after Children have left their First Classes.*

IN teaching the youngest class of children, the cultivation of the mental faculties, as well as the communication of religious knowledge, necessarily occupied a large portion of the attention of the

teacher. In the following parts of a child's religious education, this mental process will still be successfully carried on; but, if the first part has been well done, it will now go forward of itself, without especially occupying any part of the teacher's time or care.

When children have been thoroughly instructed in their first Elementary Catechisms, and have passed into the second classes, the undivided attention of the teacher should then be directed to one grand ultimate object—the teaching his pupils how to attain **THE PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES**.—Whatever path he pursues,—whatever means he employs,—this, and this alone, must be the object which he intends and endeavours to accomplish. The way by which he may most pleasantly and successfully succeed in it, we shall now endeavour shortly to point out.

His first object should be, of course to give his pupil a still more comprehensive knowledge of *Scripture doctrine*, than he has received by means of his first Catechism; and in doing so, to direct his attention, at the same time, to those reflections which those truths should, and do naturally suggest. These purposes, we conceive, will be most effectively accomplished, in the first instance, by means of the Second Initiatory Catechism, which, with its Key, and other auxiliaries, gives much facility to teachers in this important part of their duty.

The teacher should also, on some part of the same evening, now begin to teach his pupils the *use to be made of the scriptures*, and the *manner in which they should read, learn, and practise them*. This being the great aim of all his la-

bours, should be early begun and constantly attended to. For this purpose, some of the "Helps," or the "Introduction to the Help to the Gospels," may be used by the teacher, which are the only books on this principle we have yet seen. The introduction should be used first, and then the Helps; proceeding afterwards, perhaps alternately, or once a month to Genesis, or some part of the Old Testament, or to the Book of Acts, but never, either altogether, or even generally, losing sight of the New Testament, and the life and instructions of our Lord as given in the four Gospels.

The next step, in natural order, after having the general outline of Christian doctrine familiarly understood, is to point out the foundation which these doctrines have upon Scripture, or, as it is commonly denominated, the Proving of Doctrines. This Important, but delicate object, will perhaps be best attained, after the Second Initiatory Catechism has been taught, by means of the Hundred and Fifty Doctrines. These doctrines having been drawn from questions previously familiar to the children will be more readily comprehended, their connexion with their source will be more distinctly perceived, while the proofs as applied to each, will be easily traced to the doctrines which are to be proved. These, as successive links in a continuous chain, will be found a great assistance both to teacher and child.

The last finishing of a *child's* religious knowledge should be given from the shorter Catechism, —the best and most condensed view of Christian doctrine, it is believed, which has yet appeared.

*The understanding of this book will be greatly facilitated by the children having learned the Se-*



cond Initiatory Catechism, which indeed is intended to form an Introduction to it, as the proving of the doctrines in the Shorter Catechism also will be, by the previous use of the Hundred and Fifty Doctrines.

Of these, therefore, we shall speak in their order, and conclude by giving a few hints with respect to prayer, and suggesting some exercises fitted for those who may, from age or other circumstances, be induced, or obliged to leave their Sabbath School.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### *On the Manner in which Children should be Taught the Doctrines of Scripture.*

ACCORDING to the foregoing outline, the first step of a child's education, after he has left the little, or first Class, and has entered the second, is to fill up in some measure, the outline of Christian doctrine which he has received; and a teacher should set himself seriously to consider what means and what books will best suit his purpose in doing so. The first which will naturally suggest itself to a teacher is the Shorter Catechism, the best—but most abused—of any. At this period, however, we would recommend another course; and are quite sure that his purpose will be gained much sooner, as well as more successfully by delaying this, till *some other catechism*, simpler in its nature, and

more easily comprehended by the children, be gone through. This truth has now been long established, that very considerable mental culture is really necessary, before the full benefit of the Shorter Catechism can be received. The rudiments of their knowledge must be derived from a simpler source, before they be able to appreciate, or luxuriate in all the richness and beauty of that admirable epitome.

The construction, as well as the soundness and simplicity of the Second Initiatory Catechism, being internal qualities of a peculiar and valuable kind, lead us to prefer it as an introductory step to the Shorter; and which, in connexion with its external advantages, or auxiliaries, by which the whole system is connected, and every step prepared for the next, is, perhaps above any other which we know, best adapted to the religious instruction of the young, in the manner here recommended. We shall therefore draw our illustrations from the manner in which it should be taught, but which, it should be observed, will apply in its principle to almost every other.

The principal thing to be guarded against by the teacher, at this stage of a religious education, is the repeating, or committing words to memory, without the children's understanding them. However little they read or learn, it should always be understood. If the children forming the second class have previously been taught the First Initiatory Catechism, by means of the Key, or in a similar manner, the labour of the teacher in communicating, in this manner, a knowledge of the Second, will be greatly lessened; and indeed, every following step will, in that case, be compar-

atively easy. But if this has not been done, considerable care and patience at first, and a little variation in giving out the exercises, will be necessary for some time, till the children understand something of the ideas in the words they learn,—of the nature and intention of the cross-interrogatories,—and be capable of themselves of understanding the answer before committing it to memory. Of this manner of giving out the exercises we shall speak bye and by.

The question should be repeated distinctly by the children one after another, from the top to the bottom of the class, previously to catechising them; by which means the teacher will be able to detect any deficiency in their preparation for school, by not committing it properly to memory. When they have all repeated the question, the teacher should then begin to catechise them individually, in the direct method from the top to the bottom of the class, in the manner of the Key,—which generally breaks down the answer in the same order in which it is repeated. When this has been done once or twice down the class, and the children seem to understand the whole answer, the questions may be varied or combined, according to the pleasure of the teacher, by which he will still more firmly rivet it upon their mind.

When the whole answer seems to be thoroughly understood, the teacher should first take it, with the immediately *preceding question*, and catechising the children upon both, show the connexion in which the two questions stand to each other, and thus help to associate them together in their minds. Then taking three, six, or as many *as there may be time to go over of the previous*

questions, he should proceed in the same way, advancing from, or receding to, the beginning, through the book, as far as the children have learned,—endeavouring to recal to their recollection all the various truths which they have learned from the previous questions,—in the same manner as is shown in the connecting exercises at the end of the Key to the Shorter Catechism.

When any of the children are going through the catechism for the second time, they should learn and repeat the section in the "Doctrines in rhyme," corresponding to their question for the night. This little book is the parallel of the Hundred and Fifty Doctrines," of which we shall soon have occasion to speak, and contains the several doctrines in each question of the Second Initiatory Catechism, taken by themselves, each one independently of the others, and embodied in a stanza. All the stanzas containing the doctrines to a particular question are formed into a section, the number of which corresponds to the number of the question whose doctrines it contains. When, therefore, a child learns the first question in the second Initiatory Catechism, and repeats the first section in the "Doctrines in Rhyme," he substantially recites the same doctrines in different words; the one illustrating and amplifying the other, and at the same time fixing the whole, when well learned, permanently on the memory. It is these, with other useful auxiliaries, as we formerly hinted, which add so indefinitely to the value of the initiatory Catechisms.

Though the application of the truths taught in the answers, will be most effective after the doctrines are separated and proved, yet even now it

should not be neglected. *How* it should be done, will be found in the chapter following the separating and proving of doctrines, to which we refer. When it is done here, the application must always be pointed, and always short. The bare announcement indeed, of the doctrine separated from the answer, and the receiving or giving of the Practical reflection which evidently arise from it, as exemplified in the Key, will perhaps be sufficient; and if more be said, it should only be what is necessary to make it better understood or better remembered. In this manner, the teacher will make sure every step as he proceeds; and stop when he will, what he has done can never be lost.

When children, from a long habit of repeating what they do not understand, feel a difficulty in answering the extemporaneous questions of the teacher, they may for a few weeks, till they become acquainted with the system, be trained, at the time when they have their exercises prescribed, to read and answer his questions from their books. In this case, he should read, and make the children read with him, the whole answer which is to form the subject of exercise through the week, and for next Sabbath,—they, at the same time, looking on their books while he does so. The first sentence ought then to be read again, and the children should be catechised upon it in the direct method, as exemplified in the Key; they searching in the words read for the answer to the questions proposed. The next clause is then read, and the same process takes place upon it. Both are then combined, and the children are catechised upon both indiscriminately. The next is read, and the same operation is carried forward,—always joining,

by degrees, one clause to another, till the whole answer has been gone over. In this exercise, the teacher must beware of travelling beyond his subject. The child should always, at this period, have in his book the materials for forming his answer to every question, which if never deviated from, will gradually train the children, as well as the teacher, to avoid that excursive and wandering method of teaching, which is always obstructive to the having clear views of any subject, and which frequently prevents the proper understanding of it.

In this way, the apparent progress of the children will be slower, yet their actual advancement in real knowledge, and what is of still greater importance, their capacity for making still greater advances, will be increased tenfold. The powers of the mind always strengthen by exercise, and become feeble by disuse. Hence it is, that the superficial manner in which religious knowledge is commonly communicated to a child, leaves the mind at the end of three or four years as imbecile, and almost as ignorant of the doctrines and principles of Christianity as it was at the commencement; whereas, if the child had been made to learn nothing by memory, but what was communicated to him through the medium of the understanding, every week would have found him advancing in the path of improvement, and every successive idea would have prepared his mind for the reception of the next. Like the Baconian Philosophy, this mode may be more tedious and forbidding at the commencement; but the foundations of true knowledge being thus laid broad and deep, a superstructure will be reared, which will

amply compensate the labour, and is indeed the only sure method of attaining the end in view.

The parent or Sabbath school teacher, then, who spends the greater part of the prescribed time in hearing children repeat that which he knows they do not understand, while his time could be so much better employed in hearing less, and making them understand more, is, unconsciously no doubt, but still really, doing much less good than he might do, with the same sacrifice of time and trouble. And the mischief is not merely of a negative kind. There are several real evils arising from his conduct, to which he would do well to take heed. He is, for instance, neglecting to improve the only season and opportunity for religious instruction which many of the children enjoy; and who, when this opportunity is lost, have no other:—He is, in reality, only *nominally* instructing children, who, by the laws of the church, should be really and substantially taught the principles of religion under the eye of the Sessions of their respective parishes, and who would certainly be cared for by the religious public, but for the supposition that he is teaching them: He is sporting with the souls of the children he intends to teach, by sowing seed in such quantities, and in such a manner, as that even he has little probability that it will ever reach the heart, or produce fruit in the life:—And, besides all this, he is putting an effectual weapon into the hands of the enemies of Sabbath schools, who triumphantly ask for the evidences of their success in removing ignorance, or meliorating the conduct of those who are thus taught.

Let teachers reflect on these things, and inquire whether it be not so with them. If they

would wish to be successful, it must be by a different course. The teacher who will by a little pains and trouble make a child thoroughly understand one question, one verse, or one single doctrine taught in the Bible, has made a decided step in the religious instruction of that child ; and however slow or tedious his progress in this way may be at first, yet every step lessens the difficulty ; and a steady perseverance in the same course will gradually develope the powers of the mind, engage the heart, and secure more real knowledge in one month, than is generally communicated in any other way for a series of years.

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## CHAPTER XV.

*On Teaching the Knowledge of Scripture to Children, and some of the general Objects which Parents and Teachers should have in view while doing so.*

As soon as children can read the Scriptures, parents and teachers should begin the important exercise of training them to understand and apply them. This should be commenced early, and carried on along with their catechisms, as it forms a very agreeable and useful variety in the same evening's exercise. Before proceeding, therefore, to point out the manner in which the doctrines taught in the Catechisms are to be separated and proved from Scripture, which should never be



done till the doctrines themselves are learned and thoroughly understood, we shall here, more in the order of time, endeavour to explain the manner in which the knowledge of Scripture should be communicated to children. As this should constitute the chief object in all religious instruction, it will be useful in entering upon this part of our subject, to direct the attention of parents and teachers to two or three things, which they ought from the beginning steadily to keep in view through every stage of this important part of their labour.

The first thing which we would press upon their notice is, that the training of their children to the *enlightened reading* of the Scriptures generally, or, in other words, the training them to understand what portions they read, is of incalculably more advantage than their merely committing parts of them to *memory*; and, therefore, that all their exercises upon Scripture, from the very commencement, should be so conducted as to secure ultimately this most important object. How this may be done with the most effect we shall afterwards notice; at present we speak only of its *importance*.—This may easily be shown.—For example, a child who possesses a Bible, but who cannot read it, may, by a pious friend, be benefited in two ways. He may either have portions of it read to him at regular intervals; or his friends may teach him to read it for himself. The advantages of this last manner of benefiting the child will be evident to every one. For though the first may do very well so long as his friend is with him, and has time to devote to this purpose, yet, when this does not happen, the child's Bible is rendered next to useless. In the latter case, however, though more

troublesome perhaps at first, yet the labours of the individual would not only be much more valuable, but would come sooner to a successful termination. Every day and every exercise would lessen it, till at last it became altogether unnecessary.

Now, this supposed case is exactly parallel to that of which we speak. Much good may no doubt be done by children learning chapters, and having their meaning explained to them; but while the explanations are confined to *these chapters alone*, and no farther benefit to the children is thought of, it is evidently by far too circumscribed. Whereas, were the teacher to look a little farther before him, and adapt and apply his teaching in the manner we are about to recommend, so that it should be made but the means of imparting to the child the skill and the ability by which he himself would be able to advance unaided to the acquirement of still wider and more extensive views of divine truth, the advantages resulting would be as superior, as those were to the child who, instead of having a portion of Scripture *read to him* by a friend, had the whole Book of God laid open to his researches, by being *taught to read it for himself*.

It should ever be remembered, then, that the enlightened reading of the Scriptures, though it is by no means to supersede, is still unhesitatingly to be preferred to, and should always precede, the committing of them to memory. When any passage is once understood, then is the time, but not till then, to commit it to memory;—and it will then, to the child be no burden, as at present this exercise is always found to be. Nay, what will perhaps

surprise those who are as yet unacquainted with this manner of teaching, the very reading and being catechised upon a passage, will be sufficient to impress it upon the mind, and the ease of committing to memory even the more abstract and didactic parts of Scripture, after they are well understood, is not to be compared with the former mechanical drudgery of stringing words for the formation of sentences, whose meaning and connexion with each other were equally undistinguished and unknown.

Another general point which, at this period, we would wish to press upon the constant observance of the parents or teachers is, that no word or phrase should be passed without being understood. The same arguments apply here which have already been used in a similar recommendation with respect to the understanding of the first Catechisms, p. 72, to which we refer. The methods of doing this we shall speak of in a following chapter.

The last, and the most important point of all, however, which we would again anxiously urge upon the notice of parents and teachers, from the very commencement of their labours, and to which we have already repeatedly alluded, is the training of the children to the practical application of Scripture, for the regulation of their hearts and conduct. This is the purpose for which God has given us the Bible; and to fall short of it, is in a great measure to lose all our previous labour. It is like climbing the tree without plucking the fruit;—the procuring and preparing of the food, without the benefit of using it. Every previous exercise or attainment, therefore, must have reference to this. The minds of the children are to be exercised and

cultivated, that they may be enabled to read and understand the Scriptures for themselves; and they are to read and understand the Scriptures, as a message to them individually from God, that they may be able to apply them directly to themselves, and regulate their conduct accordingly.—They are to be taught from their elementary books, the doctrines, the precepts, the threatenings, and the promises of Scripture, for the very same purpose. All their exercises,—all their acquirements,—all their knowledge, from whatever source they may be derived, or in whatever manner acquired, must concentrate here as their focus; knowing, that however many may “*know* these things,” they only are happy “*who do them.*”

Let the parent and teacher then, bear in mind from the commencement, and never for a moment forget during the whole course of his exertions, that the PRACTICAL LESSONS to be drawn from Scripture and Scripture doctrines, are the essence of all his labours; and that even the early cultivation of the mind of the child of four or five years of age, by his little catechism, is to have this in prospect, however distant, as the end of his education;—the teaching of Scripture doctrines from the other catechisms, in the same manner, is also to have a direct reference to this; the understanding of Scripture, the proving of doctrines by Scripture, all, and each, are to have this grand object steadily and constantly in view, that the Bible, and the Bible alone,—the word of the living God, read and understood, is to be the only source of their religious knowledge, the only regulator of their heart and affections, and the sole directory of their life and conduct. And have we not reason

to hope, or rather have we not the promise indeed given, that the child, and every child, who is thus faithfully and prayerfully "trained up in the way he should go, when he is old will not depart from it?"

—We cannot indeed give grace; but when we use the means according to the appointment of God, we are not to doubt but that he will, in his own good time, render them effective by his blessing. Let us then endeavour, faithfully and successfully, to accomplish *our* part of the work, and he will not be wanting in *his*. How we may most effectually do this, we shall endeavour to describe in the following chapters.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

*On the Prescribing of Exercises from Scripture by the Teacher, and the Preparing of them at home by the Children.*

THE first thing which demands our attention in considering the manner of teaching the Bible to children, is the exercise to be prescribed by the teacher, and the preparing of these exercises by the children at home. This will give us an opportunity of pointing out some evils which should be guarded against, and of giving some advices which it would be well to follow.

As experience shows that a great majority of children who learn chapters and verses of the Bible do not understand them, and cannot therefore

apply the truths therein taught to the ordinary circumstances of life, it may be proper to inquire into the causes why it is so.

One principal and radical cause, as before explained, why a child does not understand the Scriptures, is the method in which he has been taught to read; namely, without being called upon by the teacher either to understand or to explain what he reads. This evil is still farther aggravated by the manner in which he generally commits his prescribed exercises to memory. He reads eight or ten words, or perhaps a line, without stopping; and taking the end of one sentence to the beginning of another, shuts his book and repeats the whole to himself, over and over successively, till the tongue mechanically pronounces the words in their order, and all this without relation to the beginning, end, or meaning of the sentence. Such a practice is itself sufficient to destroy the capacity of mind necessary for understanding what is learned.

Another cause why children do not understand those Scriptures which they have learned to repeat, is the small insulated portions which are usually prescribed at one time for their exercises. Four or six verses only engage the child's attention during a week, and accordingly, four or five chapters occupy him for a whole year; and it is three or four years before he has gone through one of the Gospels. It must be evident, then, that, in connexion with the other causes to which we have alluded, this is enough to account for the indistinct knowledge of the truths of the Bible which children possess.

These evils ought therefore always to be avoided.

ed; and the following hints will be found useful in suggesting what to adopt in their stead.

1st, The exercise prescribed should not be committed to memory in the first instance, it being a matter of much greater importance, as before observed, to train children to the enlightened reading of the Scriptures. The portion given out as an exercise should be read carefully at home by the child, who should study to make himself acquainted with the meaning, that he may be able to give an answer to any question put to him by the teacher upon any part of it, and to give an explanation of any difficult words or phrases which occur in it; and also that he may be prepared to draw practical lessons from the whole passage, or from particular verses, in the manner which will afterwards be explained.—This is evidently a much more rational manner of using the word of God, than the mere repeating of it without knowing its meaning, and is, at the same time, much easier and more pleasant to the child.

2d, The passage given out as an exercise should contain a complete account of some historical fact, or a parable;—something which the child can understand, and which will of itself engage the mind, and assist the memory. It was thus that our Lord taught his disciples, who were but children in understanding. The parables which he delivered, were easily remembered; and his disciples, by afterwards drawing the proper spiritual lessons from them, had all the advantage of didactic instruction, with greater probability of its being retained upon the memory, and brought into practice in their future conduct. In our endeavours to teach the young, we should, in this respect, closely fol-

the example of our Lord. Children recollect understand much more easily how to follow example set before them, than they can remember any abstract précept, without such assistance. the judgment be sufficiently matured, therefore the child's exercises should be confined principally to the historical parts of Scripture, particularly and principally, though perhaps not always exclusively, to the four Gospels, and the Acts of Apostles; but in going over these, the more exact and didactic portions *should be passed over the first instance*, leaving these to be committed to memory at some future period when the child will be more capable of understanding their importance, and applying them to his own individual case. This is the plan proposed, and which has been followed with so much success in the "Help to the Gospels."

4, The exercise prescribed should be large in comparison with what is generally given;—five, sixteen, or twenty verses, as may be necessary to complete the section, may perhaps be a proper portion. A whole chapter in some instances would not be too much. And as the children are not required to commit the whole to memory, but only to *read and study its meaning*, there will, even in this last case, be much less labour, and a much pleasanter exercise, than if they were obliged to repeat only five or six verses.

The advantages of this mode of teaching the contents of the Bible are many. A child by this means becomes much better and sooner acquainted with the history of our Lord's life, miracles, parables, and sufferings. In ordinary cases, one of the Gospels would occupy a child three or four years,



even if he should attend the school regularly all that time, which, however, is but seldom the case. So that, on account of the small portions given out, the long period of time which necessarily intervenes between the commencing and ending of a section, together with the irregularities of learning well and ill, or of his absence on particular occasions, a *section* when concluded, appears a mass of disjointed fragments, floating on the mind of the child without connexion or meaning. If this then is the case with one section, which may only occupy one or two months, how much more must it be the case with what usually occupies the space of not less than two or three years.

Again, by giving a large portion of the Scriptures to be read and studied, the mind of the child more readily expands to comprehend the meaning of that, and every thing else to which his attention is directed. This is what is most required in the education of children. What the teacher generally complains of, is the want of comprehension in the scholars, whose minds cannot take a sufficient grasp of the truths communicated. This defect is always cherished and strengthened by the repeating system, and can only be remedied by the above method. In the First Edition of this Work, one school was particularly referred to, where the children by merely reading a passage, and being catechised upon it, were without farther trouble, able to repeat the whole in substance, and nearly in the very words of Scripture. This is now becoming general, and can be seen in almost every school where the Lesson System has been for a few months adopted. It is now generally considered a kind of curious mental barometer, by which

the intellectual culture of every child individually, may with considerable accuracy be measured ;— as the capacity of giving the substance of a passage after being read and catechised upon, arises, not so much from the retentiveness of the memory, as from the strength of the judgment, and the illumination of the mind, which enable the child distinctly to perceive its meaning, and at once to take a comprehensive view of the whole subject. In this manner the word of God must grow in them exceedingly, and with much less danger of its being ever afterwards forgotten. Who would not wish to be the means of training but *one child* in this enlightened manner, to comprehend the great and important truths contained in the oracles of God ?

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## CHAPTER XVII.

*On the Manner of Teaching Children to understand the Scriptures, and to draw Practical Lessons from them.*

WHEN the children come prepared with their exercises on Scripture, the teacher's duty divides itself into three distinct parts ; each of which should be attended to separately, the one after the other. The first is the Catechetical Exercise, by which the children are, in some measure, forced to understand the meaning of the passage ;—the second is the Explanation of the words or phrases which

occur in it; and the last is the drawing out of the Practical Lessons. Of these we shall speak in their order.

The Catechetical Exercise on the verses, as they stand in the chapter, should be carried on regularly from the top of the class downwards, making every child answer a question, passing to the next for an answer if he cannot give it, or putting it to any other child, or to the class generally, as the teacher may think proper. This part of the evening's exercise, for the sake of keeping up the attention of the children, should be carried on with as much *liveliness* as possible. The teacher should pass rapidly with the questions from one child to another, sometimes putting a question out of the due order, to any one who may appear careless; and, calling the attention of the children generally to a question, requiring an answer from any or from all the children of the class at the same time. In short he ought, in this part of the evening's duty, to do every thing in his power to arrest their attention, excite that exercise of mind so frequently before alluded to, and keep their thoughts from wandering from the subject in hand. Sometimes the teacher may propose a question to the whole, and desire the children to prepare the answer, but allowing none to give it but the particular individual whom he shall afterwards point out; and he ought constantly to require each child, in the same manner, to endeavour to answer to himself, in his own mind, every question proposed to any of his companions.

When the questions upon the first verse have been gone over in this manner, and afterwards reversed, and repeated, the second should be gone

over in the same manner; then, connecting both the first and second, and again going over them together, he should proceed to the third, and so on with all the others in their order, endeavouring to make every child thoroughly acquainted, not only with the main scope and outline of the passage, but also with the more minute circumstances, connected with, and included in, the several parts of it.

It may here be of use to mention, that this manner of putting extemporaneous questions has often been most erroneously considered a natural talent,—most useful indeed and desirable,—but not always or easily to be attained. The truth is that it is an art which, when the principles upon which it proceeds are known, may, with a little pains, be successfully practised by any one. Referring to the next chapter for the example, and to the Appendix, we shall only notice here, that the whole art consists in the simple principle, of making every material circumstance, or principal word in a passage, the *answer* to a question. The teacher, of course, forming his question in such a manner as to force the child, if he answer correctly, to give that word or circumstance as the answer.

The second department of the evening's exercise on the passage, is the Explanation of all the difficult words or phrases which occur in it. This is not done till the catechetical exercise is finished; when the passage is carefully searched by the teacher, verse by verse, who, as he goes along, proposes to the Children in their order, a word or phrase for them to explain. If the child at whom he asks the explanation cannot give it, he passes to the next, or he gives the explanation himself; or endeavours to elicit an explanation by catechis-

ing in the indirect method; for a description and illustration of which, however, we must again refer to the Appendix.

The last and most important part of the exercise, is the drawing out of the practical lessons from the passage;—an exercise which we will be able to show, and which experience has now proved, to be quite within the reach of almost every child. It does require indeed a mind in some degree cultivated and strengthened by exercise,—but the weekly labours of the parent or teacher, conducted as we have before recommended, necessarily produce this: It requires also a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the passage,—but this, with children of ordinary capacity, is almost always produced by the reading, studying at home, and particularly by the use of the catechetical exercise in the school. For some time it will be necessary for the parent, or teacher, to announce the fact or circumstance in the verse or passage from which he wishes them to draw the lesson, as is exemplified in the, “Introduction to the Help to the Gospels;” where parents and teachers will at once perceive what is here meant, and which they will be enabled readily to follow; but, for the sake of illustration, we shall give a complete example in the following chapter. By degrees, even this announcement will become unnecessary, and the teacher will soon find, that when a child reads any verse, in any part of his Bible, suitable for such an exercise, and is asked, “What lessons does this verse teach you?”—his own mind will gradually perceive and distinguish the several points in it necessary for “doctrine, for reproof, for correction, or for instruction in righteousness,” and

he will be able to state them accordingly. Till this, however, be in some measure attained, no one should consider his religious education as finished; and for the attainment of this no pains or labour ought to be spared, on the part of either pupil or teacher. "The introduction to the Help," with the several "Helps" themselves, will materially assist parents and teachers in this important duty; who will, by their means, soon be able to acquire such an aptness in turning the refreshing streams of divine truth into the channel of their conduct, as will be found peculiarly pleasant, and incalculably profitable.

The application of the lessons to the children is kept up and revived in their memory by revising them afterwards in the catechetical form. This exercise will be most easily understood by examples, one of which is included in every Section in the "Introduction to the Help:" but, in the meantime, we shall give a specimen of it, among the other examples in the following chapter.

To those children who are able to write, the teacher should, at first, enjoin their writing at home, through the week, all the lessons of the *previous* Sabbath which they can remember; and as they advance, and are capable of it, he should then make them deduce lessons for themselves from the passage which is to be taken under consideration on the *following* Sabbath; which lessons should be read by them in the school, and afterwards given for revisal to the teacher. This plan, prudently and steadily pursued, will not only greatly accelerate the improvement of the children, but will give them an additional and a deeper interest in the school and its exercises.

One other use to be made of these lessons we shall do little more than merely to hint at, which is, that children ought to be taught to turn them *into subjects of prayer*. This will be more particularly noticed in its proper place; but we shall give an example of it along with the other exercises, in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *An Example of the Method of Teaching the Scriptures recommended in the foregoing Chapters.*

WE intend, in this chapter, to give a complete example upon a small scale, of what has been termed, the **LESSON SYSTEM OF TEACHING THE SCRIPTURES**; which, as it will afford us an opportunity of interspersing our illustrations and remarks as we proceed, will be more beneficial to parents, or teachers, as a specimen, than by our referring generally to the sections of the "Introduction to the Help," or to those of the "Helps" themselves.—These will, no doubt, be of great benefit to the teacher, but their principles and their use will be better understood by the method which we here propose.

We have chosen for our purpose Luke iv. 38, 39, principally because of its forming a complete section, within small bounds, which will enable us to exhaust the whole subject, without unnecessarily tiring the reader. Our object throughout, however,

will be, to exhibit the various examples in such a manner as will enable him to apply the principle to any other passage of Scripture whatever.

One caution to the reader, however, before we go farther. We will be full,—much fuller than will in general be necessary,—on each of the exercises. This we do for his sake; but we do not wish him, in this particular point, at first to follow our example. He will, by this means, see what *may* be done, though this would not always be either necessary or proper. This we say, both for his warning and his encouragement; as we have no doubt, that if he will but bend his mind to the subject as we proceed, the simplicity and ease of execution, in applying the system, will be as striking as its efficiency. Let him take the parts, not in the mass, but separately, in judging of their ease, and he will at once be persuaded of his ability if he be but willing, to adopt this course and pursue it with success.

#### SUBJECT.—Luke iv. 38, 39.

Ver. 38. "*And he (Jesus) arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house: and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.*" Ver. 39. "*And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.*"

• We must here again remark, that to give a child the full benefit of this or any other passage, two things are necessary; the first is, that it be understood, and the second, that he may know how to apply its truths to himself. The catechetical ex-



ercises and the explanations accomplish the first of these objects; the lessons, and the application of the lessons are intended to accomplish the second. We shall therefore attend to each of these four in its order.

### SECT. I.—Of the Catechetical Exercise.

The object of the teacher in catechising is to make the children themselves search out the meaning of the passage, by finding among the words they have read or repeated, answers to his questions. For this purpose, he must raise a question from every principal word or phrase in the passage, or, in other words, make the children give these to him as answers to his questions. In this consists the whole art of the *direct* method of catechising;—of the *indirect* method we shall have occasion afterwards to speak. The reader will perceive our meaning, by the following example from the 38th verse.

"And [<sup>1</sup> he] [<sup>2</sup> arose] out of [<sup>3</sup> the synagogue,] and [<sup>4</sup> entered] into [<sup>5</sup> Simon's] [<sup>6</sup> house.]"

All these words enclosed in brackets, must have a question made for them; that is, the teacher must so form his questions, as to cause the child to give these respectively as answers. Thus, for the first word, "he," the question "Who arose?" would give it, or its noun, "Jesus," for the answer; the second would have "What did he do?" or "What did Jesus do?" the third, "Out of what did he arise?" and the others in such order as will best bring out the sense, "What did he do when he arose out of the synagogue?" (<sup>4</sup>, <sup>5</sup>, <sup>6</sup>) "Into what did he enter?" (<sup>5</sup>, <sup>6</sup>) "Into whose house did he enter?" (<sup>5</sup>) "What is

said about Simon's house?" (1, 4, 5, 6) "Who entered into Simon's house?" (1) "When did he enter into Simon's house?" (1, 2, 3) &c.

From this it will appear, how catechising enables a child to understand the passage upon which he is examined; as each of these questions brings the whole sentence each time before him, which he must always understand before he can answer. In the same manner, the other clauses are brought forward one after the other. They must then be varied and combined as the teacher may think proper, which attention to the above simple principle will soon enable him to do. If at any time he should be at a loss in forming extemporaneous questions upon a passage, let him with a pencil circumflex all the principal words and phrases in it, as is done above, and by exercising himself by means of the simple rule before given, all his difficulties will gradually disappear.

The following examples of transposition and combining questions from a whole verse, will, *by comparison with the passage*, be sufficient to show the principle upon which almost any variety may be formed. "What did the people in Simon's house do?"—"Who was ill?"—"Where was she?"—"Why did the people beseech Christ?"—"For what did the people beseech Christ?"—"When did the people beseech Christ?"—"For whom did the people beseech Christ?"—"Who was this woman's daughter?"—"To whom was her daughter married?"—"Where was she at the time when she was ill?"—"Where had Jesus been?" &c. These compound, or *auxiliary* questions, however, ought never to be put till all the *primary* ones *have been asked, understood, and exhausted.*

These and similar questions to which the child himself must find answers, have the effect of throwing him invariably and successively back upon his own mind, for the purpose of searching, contrasting, and combining the words he has repeated, in order to prepare the answer;—and thus strength and energy of mind are produced, as well as a clear and comprehensive view of the whole subject.

## SECT. II.—*Of the Explanations.*

The next part of the teacher's duty is to require from the children, or himself to give, the explanations of all the difficult words or phrases which may occur in the verses. We can easily suppose that a child may thoroughly understand what is meant by the passage generally, and yet he may not completely understand some of its words. For example, he may know that Christ arose out of a place called a "synagogue," and yet he may not know what a synagogue means. He may know, that Simon's mother-in-law, after she was cured, did something to Jesus and his disciples, here called "ministering" unto them, and yet he may not know what this really was. These terms must therefore be explained to him: or rather, he should have prepared himself at home to give their explanations.

Most of the words may have the explanations given by the children simply, in the following manner, beginning at the top of the class, and passing from one child to another regularly till the whole be finished.

*Teacher.* What is a synagogue?

*Scholar.* A house for prayer; a church, or place of public worship among the Jews.

T. What is meant by "besought?"

S. To ask something with much earnestness.

T. What is here meant by "Rebuked?"

S. It means here that Christ, by his power, stopt the violence of the fever, and made it leave her.

In these, it must be observed, that when the scholar cannot, the teacher must give the explanation himself. In some others, however, the children, although they do not at first understand their meaning, may, by the *indirect method* of catechising, be able to attain it of themselves, and which should always, wherever the case will admit of it, be attempted. This indirect method of catechising, which is similar to the Socratic mode of reasoning, gives great scope to the ingenuity of a teacher, and is generally both an interesting and instructive exercise for the children. We may take an example from the present verses, although not so well fitted for it, perhaps, as most others.

*Teacher.* What is meant by the woman's "ministering unto them?"

*Scholar.* I cannot tell.

T. What would you say the person was who was engaged in ministering to another?

S. A minister.

T. And what is a minister?

S. One who preaches.

T. Do the King's ministers preach?

S. No.

T. There must then be another reason why these persons are called ministers.—What do the King's ministers do for him?

S. They serve him.

T. And what do Christ's ministers do for him when they minister to his people?

S. They serve him.

T. And what did the woman do when she ministered to Christ and his disciples?

S. She served them.

T. What then is meant by "ministering?"

S. It means *serving*, or giving them what they require

An explanation or a lesson got in this manner, has a much better effect, and is always more deeply riveted on the memory than it can be when it is only *told* them. A little preparation by the teacher in this department, will be found entertaining and useful to himself, as well as to the children.

Some may perhaps think, that the explanations should be given *before* the children are catechised on the passage, rather than *after* it. But experience has shown that this is incorrect. The children's minds are always better prepared for the explanation of that about which they have heard something, than of that about which they as yet know nothing. In the "Introduction to the Help," and in the "Helps" themselves, accordingly, the explanations are uniformly placed *after* the catechetical exercise, and not *before* it.

It may be proper, before leaving this subject, to warn parents and teachers of the danger of taking too much for granted in this exercise; and thinking, that because certain words and phrases are quite familiar to *themselves*, therefore they are so also to the *children*. This is a great mistake. But even although the words were known, the children will always be benefited by giving the explanations again in their own words. This will make the meaning still more plain, and will enable them more readily to describe or explain any thing else which they know. All the remaining words or phrases, therefore, about the meaning of which there may be any doubt, should be gone over in this manner.

**Teacher.** What is meant by "being taken with a fever?"

**Scholar.** She was ill with a fever.

**T.** What is meant by "stood over her?"

**S.** He stood up at her bed-side.

If, in any instance, none of the children can give the explanation, and the teacher has to give it himself, he should, after doing so, again ask the question, and make several of them repeat the explanation in their own words. This will assist them in remembering the meaning of the word, when it again occurs at any future period.

### SECT. III.—*Of Drawing the Practical Lessons from the Verses.*

The exercises, conducted as here recommended, will, in almost every instance, have, by this time, secured to the children a clear view of the general meaning of the passage, and of all its parts.—They will be able to relate, in their own words, that Jesus came out of the synagogue; went into Peter's house, where his wife's mother lay sick of a fever; that they besought him to heal her; that he stood at her bed side and rebuked the fever, which then left her; after which she immediately arose, and served Jesus and those who were with him.—This then is the foundation properly laid, upon which the parent or teacher is now to build the superstructure. But were he to stop here, or if the children should never get more than the *bare knowledge of the facts* in the passage, it is obvious that but little,—very little good would comparatively be done. For what purpose, we would ask, does a merchant learn book-keeping, or an engineer mathematics, or the statesman political economy, but to apply them when occasion requires.—

And for the same purpose the Christian learns his Bible. The children must therefore now be taught how to draw from the verses the Practical Lessons for their individual "correction, or instruction in righteousness."

For this purpose the parent or teacher should himself carefully consider the passage, verse by verse, separating in his own mind the several circumstances recorded in it, and endeavouring to apply these one after another, to his own case, or the case of the children,—selecting one perhaps as an example,—another as a warning,—another as confirming some doctrine,—and another perhaps as pointing out a certain line of conduct in certain given circumstances; taking care, however, to apply them agreeably to the passage, and also to the general analogy of the Word of God. We shall, therefore, to show how this may be done, dissect the present verses, and separate as we go along, the circumstances related, or which are necessarily implied in them.

**Ver. 38.** "And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house."

From this we collect these circumstances, that Christ was attending the public worship of God in the synagogue; that he, for the purpose of receiving rest and refreshment, as seen from the 39th verse, went out of the synagogue; and that Simon, that Jesus might receive this rest and refreshment, received him into his house where it was bestowed.

"And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever."

Here we are told that Simon had a wife; that and his wife mutually supported, and took care of, and as, it immediately follows, prayed for his aged and sick parent; and that Simon, though a good man and a disciple of Christ, was yet visited with family affliction.

**And they besought him for her."**

Here we are told, that the people in Peter's house prayed; that they mutually joined in prayer that Peter, and those with him, besought Christ for his mother-in-law when she could not pray for herself; and that the object of their prayer was the removal of this fever.

**Ver. 39. "And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her."**

Here we are told, that Christ not only heard their prayer, but immediately answered it; that he came and stood at the bed-side of the sick woman; that he rebuked the fever; and that, at his word, and by his power, it instantly left her.

**And immediately she arose, and ministered unto them."**

We have here the proof and the result of the cure. The woman no longer lay on her bed, but rose up; she did this immediately; and, on rising, employed herself in serving Christ, and in ministering to the wants, and the wants of his followers.

Now we confidently appeal to our readers whether there is any passage in Scripture, either in the Old Testament, or in the New, which, by a little attention, may not be broken down, and separated into parts in a similar manner. We have no



doubt that he is ready to say, "This is indeed very simple and easy;"—And so it is. Any child by a little attention, may be taught to do it, when he once thoroughly understands the meaning of the passage,—which, let it be observed, the catechetical exercise and the explanations scarcely ever fail to give. Yet almost all the difficulty of drawing lessons lies within this narrow compass; and we shall immediately see, that when the circumstances have been separated, and when each is stated properly by itself, the lesson taught by it will instantly appear. We shall therefore, for this purpose, collect these circumstances in their order, and number them for the sake of reference.

1. Jesus attended public worship.
2. Jesus after worship sought rest and refreshment.
3. Simon received Jesus into his house, and gave him rest and refreshment.
4. Peter and his wife supported, and cherished, and prayed for their aged and sick parent.
5. Peter, though a good man and a disciple of Christ, was visited with family affliction.
6. The people in Simon's house prayed to Christ.
7. All the people in the house joined together in praying to Christ.
8. The people prayed to Christ for the cure of the fever.
9. They prayed for the woman when she could not pray for herself.
10. Jesus heard their prayer and answered it.
11. At Christ's word the fever was cured.
12. When the fever was gone, the woman arose to her duties.

13. The woman, when cured, arose and ministered to the wants of Christ and his disciples.
14. The woman made no delay, but immediately arose to serve Christ and his disciples.

This minute manner of dissecting the passage here, will, we hope, encourage some to try more barren passages, and induce them to persevere in a course, of the most pleasant and profitable description, not for the children merely, but also for themselves. It shows what *may* be done where the parent or teacher sets himself, with earnestness and application, to dig deep in this rich and inexhaustible mine of divine truth.

The circumstances being separated in the mind of the parent or teacher, he has only to state one to the children, who, after a few months' training, will generally be able to give the corresponding lesson; and by pursuing this mode of training them, it is evident that they will, of themselves, gradually acquire the habit of understanding, and applying to their own conduct and conscience, almost *every passage of Scripture which they read or hear*.

Till they be able to separate the circumstances for themselves, the parent or teacher must give the circumstance, and try to get them to perceive its import, and to give the lesson, in the following manner. The reason of inserting a reference letter to each of the lessons will afterwards appear.

*Teacher. Christ attended the synagogue, or Jewish Church, for public worship; (No. 1, ver. 38.) What do you learn from that?*

(a) *Scholar.* It teaches us, that we also, like Christ, should attend public worship.

*T. Jesus left the synagogue, and went to Simon's house for rest and refreshment; (No. 2, ver. 38.)* What do you learn from that?

(b) *S.* It teaches us, that it is lawful and proper, at seasonable times, to attend to the rest and refreshment of the body.

*T. Simon took Jesus into his house, and gave him rest and refreshment; (No. 3, ver. 38.)* What does that teach you?

(c) *S.* It teaches us, that we ought to be affectionate and hospitable to one another, and should supply the wants and refresh the bodies of our brethren when they require it.

*T. Peter and his wife supported and cherished their aged and sick parent; (No. 4, ver. 38.)* What does that teach you?

(d) *S.* That we ought to be kind and dutiful to our parents in health, but especially in sickness.

*T. Peter and his wife prayed for their aged and sick parent; (No. 4, ver. 38.)* What do you learn from that?

(e) *S.* That we should pray for our parents; and not only attend to the supply of their temporal, but also of their spiritual wants.

*T. Peter was a good man, and yet he was visited with affliction; (No. 5, ver. 38.)* What do you learn from that?

(f) *S.* It teaches us, that good men may expect to meet with temporal calamities.

*T.* Give me another lesson.

(g) *S.* It teaches us also, that temporal calamities are no sure signs of God's displeasure.

*T.* Give me another lesson.

(h) *S.* It teaches us also, that afflictions are to God's people real blessings; for if they were not, they would not be sent.

*T. The people prayed; (No. 6, ver. 38.)* What does that teach you?

(i) *S.* That it is our duty to be regular and constant in the duty of prayer.

*T. The people joined together in prayer; (No. 7, ver. 38.)* What does that teach you?

(j) *S.* That we should not only pray by ourselves in secret, but that we should also pray with and for one another.

*T. The people prayed to Christ to heal the woman of her fever; (No. 8, ver. 38.)* What do you learn from that?

(k) *S.* It teaches us, that we ought to lay all our wants and afflictions before God, and seeking the sanctified use of them, submissively to pray for their removal.

*T. The people prayed for the woman, when she could not pray for herself; (No. 9, ver. 38.)* What do you learn from that?

(l) S. It teaches us, that times may occur in providence which may greatly impede or prevent prayer.

T. Give me another lesson.

(m) S. It teaches us, that we should be diligent in the exercise of prayer when we are able, or have opportunity.

T. Give me another lesson.

(n) S. It teaches us, that we should take pity on those who cannot, or will not pray for themselves.

T. Give me another lesson.

(o) S. It teaches us that we should pray for those who cannot, or will not pray for themselves.

T. Give me another lesson.

(p) S. It teaches us, that we should assist and encourage our brethren in their prayers for the temporal or spiritual welfare of their friends or others.

T. *Jesus heard and answered their prayers*; (No. 10, ver. 39.) What does that teach you?

(q) S. It teaches us, that God will hear and answer our prayers.

T. *Jesus cured the fever with a word*; (No. 11, ver. 39.) What does that teach you?

(r) S. That all troubles and afflictions are under the control and direction of Christ, who can remit or remove them when he pleases.

T. *When the woman was cured, she did not continue on her bed, but arose to attend to her duty*; (No. 12, ver. 39.) What does that teach you?

(s) S. That laziness and idleness are not to be indulged.

T. Give me another lesson.

(t) S. It teaches us also, that when God gives us health and opportunities of usefulness, we ought to be diligent in improving them.

T. *The woman when cured, employed herself in ministering to the wants of Christ and his disciples*; (No. 13, ver. 39.) What do you learn from that?

(u) S. That we should be grateful for the mercies and deliverances of God's providence.

T. Give me another lesson from this.

(v) S. That our love and gratitude to God should be exhibited by our conduct in life.

T. Give me another lesson from this.

(w) S. That our love to God may be exhibited by our kindness and attention to his people.

T. Give me another lesson from this.

(x) S. That the time of health is the time for being active and diligent in the service of God.

T. Give me another lesson from this ?

(y) S. That life restored, and health renewed by the kindness and mercy of God, should be dedicated to his service.

T. Give me another lesson from this.

(z) S. That we should dedicate our substance to the service of Christ, and to the supply of his people's wants.

T. *The woman upon being cured, rose immediately, and served Christ*; (No. 14, ver. 39.) What do you learn from that ?

(aa) S. It teaches us, that we ought not to delay duty, but should improve the present time in coming to Christ, and engaging in his service.

If in any instance the children are unable to give the lesson from an announcement, the teacher should elicit it from them by means of the indirect method of catechising, for which we must refer to the Appendix.

Some may think, that we have in this specimen, been extravagantly minute ; but we have already made our apology, and stated our reasons for being so ; and have no doubt, that the great majority of our readers must have seen in this example enough to convince them of the ease, as well as the utility of communicating the knowledge of the Bible in this manner. If, however, any should still urge incapacity, there is assistance at hand ; "The Introduction to the Helps," and the "Helps" themselves, make the duty as easy as possible ; so much so, that no parent or teacher of the most ordinary talents can with any shadow of reason, plead want of ability. How painful is it then to think, that such an important and useful part of a child's religious education, which could be so easily and pleasantly communicated and acquired, has been so long and so generally neglected ! Let the re-

roach now, however, be for ever wiped from the church of Christ, and the dwellings of his people; and let every parent and teacher, in the training of young Christians for filling their stations in the church below, and for occupying the mansions of their Master in heaven, no longer substitute barren words for the precious and animating truths of the Bible; and having once found and commenced a more rational system,—having begun to see the cheering and happy influences of the “sincere milk of the word” upon the minds and hearts of their young charge, let them beware of ever again returning back to the “weak and beggarly elements.”

#### SECT. IV.—*Of the Application of the Lessons.*

The knowledge of the Bible, and the thorough understanding of its truths, we before compared to the broad and solid foundation upon which a religious education rests;—and the practical lessons drawn from those truths, to the building which was raised upon it. Were we to pursue the metaphor, we would say, that the application of the lessons to the heart and conduct of the scholar, of which we are now about to speak, and their adaptation to prayer, which shall be afterwards noticed, may be considered the fittings,—the furnishings,—the ornaments of the whole edifice; while the JUSTIFIED SOUL, in the exercise of practical godliness, aiming daily at greater degrees of sanctification, is the active inhabitant,—the occupier,—the enjoyer of this valuable fabric and its precious furniture. An ingenious mind will be able, perhaps, to trace the simile much farther and closer than

many would imagine at first view ; but at present, we proceed with the illustration and example of the application of the lessons.

This exercise, is principally for *revising*. It is the spirit,—the summing up of the whole exercise ;—that which helps to revive on the memory, and to perpetuate in the conduct, those lessons which have been formerly drawn from any, or various passages. It is similar in its nature to the connecting exercises, which are so beneficial in practice in the “ Key to the First Initiatory Catechism,” and those at the end of the “ Key to the Shorter Catechism.” Its nature and usefulness will be best illustrated by seeing the manner of its application. Not to be too prolix, we shall use only a few of the most palpable of the foregoing lessons in this example, by which, however, our readers will be enabled after a little practice, to adopt the plan, in regard to any passage, with ease and success.

**Teacher.** What is your duty with respect to public worship ?  
(a. ver. 38.)

**Scholar.** I should regularly attend upon the public worship of God.

**T.** From what do you derive that lesson ?

**S.** From Luke iv. 38, where we are told, that Christ, who is our example, attended at the synagogue to worship God.

**T.** What is your duty with respect to your brethren who may stand in need of your bounty or help ? (c. ver. 38.)

**S.** We should be kind and bountiful in supplying their wants, or in giving them rest and refreshment when they require it.

**T.** From whence do you derive that lesson ?

**S.** From the conduct of Simon Peter, Luke iv. 38, who received Jesus into his house, that he might receive rest and refreshment.

**T.** What is your duty to your parents ? (d, e. ver. 38.)

**S.** I ought to be kind and grateful to them, support and comfort them in old age or sickness, and pray for their temporal and spiritual good.

**T.** From what do you draw that lesson ?

**S.** From Luke iv. 38, where we are given to understand, that Peter and his wife supported their aged parent, nursed her in sickness, and prayed to Jesus in her behalf.

**T.** What should we do when we, or any of our friends, are visited with sickness or affliction ? (*k. ver. 38.*)

**S.** We should present our requests to God for its removal, and especially that they or we may receive the sanctified use of it.

**T.** From what do you draw that lesson ?

**S.** From Luke iv. 38, where, when Peter's wife's mother was unwell, they laid her case before Christ, and besought his interference.

**T.** What is your duty with respect to those of your brethren, or neighbours, or others, who cannot, or will not pray for themselves ? (*o. ver. 38.*)

**S.** We should pray with them and for them.

**T.** From what do you derive that lesson ?

**S.** From Luke iv. 38, where we are told that when Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever, and could not pray for herself, those present joined in petitioning Christ on her behalf.

**T.** What should make us patient or submissive under bodily or family distress ? (*r. ver. 39.*)

**S.** The knowledge that every trouble and affliction is under the control and direction of Christ, who can remit or remove them when he pleases.

**T.** From what do you draw this lesson ?

**S.** From Luke iv. 39, where we are told that Jesus rebuked a fever, and it immediately left the woman.

**T.** When God grants us the blessings of health, what should we do ? (*t. ver. 39.*)

**S.** We ought to be diligent in performing those duties, to do which health gives us opportunity.

**T.** From what do you draw this lesson ?

**S.** From the case of Simon's mother-in-law, Luke iv. 39, who rose when she was cured, to perform the duties of the family.

**T.** When we are raised from sickness, or relieved from the danger of death, what should we do ? (*y. ver. 39.*)



**S.** We ought to dedicate our restored health to the service of God and his cause.

**T.** From what do you draw this lesson?

**S.** From the conduct of Peter's mother-in-law, Luke iv. 39, who, when restored to health, arose and ministered to the wants of Christ and his people, &c. &c.

One remark will here be necessary, and it is of some importance,—that it would be very difficult, without circumlocution, to apply some of the lessons which we have omitted in the above application. This shows the propriety of drawing no lessons, for some time, at least, but those which are most palpable, which are easiest remembered, and readiest applied. To do otherwise at first would but tend to weaken the effect of the whole. But when teachers, parents, and children, have become expert in this exercise, it will be proper for them to investigate and canvass each passage thoroughly, and in this manner to obey the injunctions: "*Search the Scripture;*"—"Seek ye out of the book of the Lord."

**SECT. V.—Of the Use which may be made of the Lessons in Prayer.**

In giving an example of this method of teaching religion, it would be improper in the Author to omit one part of it, which, though yet but little known or practised, he has no doubt will shortly form one of the most important and valuable of its branches. That is, the teaching of children, after having drawn the Lessons from a passage, to apply them as integral parts of prayer. He is encouraged to hope this, from the rapid and unexpected success which has already attended the promulgation of the system. A few years have

wrought an extraordinary change for the better in this important matter; and although it is yet in general but in its infancy, the effects have already in numerous instances become so extensive and striking, that there is now less fear, by bringing this important and valuable branch into notice, of terrifying or bewildering the teachers, or burdening or banishing the scholars. Where such an advance has not yet been made, or where the system has not attained to that degree of maturity, we have only to request, that teachers would go on steadily as they are doing with the first principles, and not take up this, or any other of the more advanced parts of the Exercise, till it can be done with ease and safety. Where children have been for a year or two carefully attended to, and particularly, where all the children in families, or schools, have been thus taught from infancy, there will be no need for this caution. Till then, however, there is a danger of some being afraid or discouraged to advance, by the very appearance of complicity, and from the feeling, that there is here, as there may be in other matters, really *too much of a good thing*.

Referring our readers to "The Elements and Practice of Prayer," and a chapter on the subject which will be found in a subsequent part of this treatise, we shall here only, to render this example complete, show how the foregoing lessons may be used in giving new life, and energy, and fluency in prayer, when the subject from which the lessons have been drawn, and the lessons themselves have, by the various exercises, become familiar to the mind.

The letters refer to the respective lessons in the

preceding pages, from which the parts of prayer are drawn, and by a reference to which they may be found. A little attention in comparing these, will show at once the manner in which they are severally adapted to adoration, confession, petition, &c. while the numbers in the announcements of the several lessons will, when it is required, direct to the verse and the facts from which they take their rise, and thus show their immediate connexion with Scripture. A little attention to these hints will be peculiarly useful to those who wish to excel in this mode of usefulness.

*Adoration.* (q) Thou, Lord, art the hearer and answerer of prayer ;—(k) our only help and refuge in the time of trouble ;—(r) who hast every affliction under thy control and direction ; and canst remit or remove it when thou pleasest.

*Confession.* We confess with humility and shame, (aa) that we have too long delayed to attend to the calls of thy gospel ; and to (y) dedicate our life and health to thy service. We have too often neglected to perform the (d) duty, and render that submission and love which we owe to our parents ; as well as (c) to sympathize with, and to supply the wants of our brethren.

*Thanksgiving.* But we thank thee, that though we have so grievously transgressed against thee, yet (a) do we still enjoy the means of grace, and the ordinances of the gospel ; that we enjoy (b) many of the temporal comforts of this life, (f) and that while others around us are visited with trouble and sickness, and death, we have health of body and soundness of mind ; (l) seasons for prayer and for (j) social worship ; and have also many (t) opportunities of being useful in the world.

*Petition.* Help us (a) to improve the public ordinances of thy grace ;—(b) gratefully to use, without abusing the temporal comforts of life ;—(c) to be affectionate and kind, and hospitable to our brethren, when they stand in need of our assistance ;—(d) and to be kind and dutiful to our parents ; seeking to promote their temporal, (e) but especially their spiritual good.—(k) Help us to bring all our afflictions to thee, and humbly to ask that thou wouldest give us the sanctified

se of them, and also that thou wouldest remove them.—(f) assist us in bearing up, with resignation and patience, under them all ;—(r) and to know that they are all under thy control, and that thou canst remit, or remove them when thou pleasest. (g) Help us also to remember, that, whilst thou continuest them, it is still in mercy and in love ;—(h) and that thou both canst, and wilt turn them into mercies and blessings.—(i) Enable us to be regular and constant in the duty of prayer, both in secret, and (j) with our families and brethren.—(n) Especially help us to take pity upon, and (o) to pray for those who cannot, or will not pray for themselves, (p) and to join with, and to assist and encourage our brethren in doing so.—(l) Keep us from any circumstance in life, or dispensation of providence, which may prevent or impede us in this profitable duty ;—(m) and while we enjoy the opportunity, make us diligent and constant in improving it ;—(l) and if, by disease or sickness, we be unable to collect our thoughts in prayer ; (o) stir up we beseech thee, our brethren to pray with us and for us. (u) Make us grateful for the mercies and blessings of thy providence ;—(y) and enable us to dedicate our life, and health, (z) and substance to thy service and glory ; (v) showing our gratitude by our daily conduct, by (x) diligence and activity in thy service, (w) and by being attentive to the wishes and wants of thy servants and people. (aa) Keep us from delaying our return unto thee, and enable us to improve the present moment in attending to our salvation, and engaging in thy service ; and (q) do thou hear and answer these our prayers, &c. &c.

The importance of such an application of the Lessons drawn from scripture, in preventing deadness and monotony in prayer, and gradually giving variety, and spirit, and energy, and influence in it, is very great : and when we remember, that the passage is supposed to be well understood, and the lessons naturally and legitimately drawn, the application of these lessons as parts of our petitions in prayer with the children in the school, and by the children themselves in secret, is at once most *desirable, and certainly practicable.*

In drawing this example to a close, we think it must now be obvious, that the influence of this mode of teaching on a child's future life, must be both powerful and permanent,—and the anticipations to which the general adoption of such a system of religious education gives rise, are of the most animating and splendid description. What may not be expected when a parish, a district, or even a family, are thus taught! If two or three verses of Scripture, by *one day's teaching* be capable of supplying to a child's mind so many practical lessons for the direction of his faith and practice;—if by a certain mode of revising these they shall be so permanently fixed on the memory, and so orderly arranged in the mind, as to be ready to appear with their direction and advice on every suitable occasion;—what may not ministers, or teachers or parents, hope to see realized by three, six or ten years similar tuition? The effects of it are already, in some parts of the country, beginning to dawn. There has as yet been no instance of failure. Success, in an extraordinary degree, has in every case, followed its adoption; and anticipations of its influence are increasing and brightening every day. Every step too which is made in this manner is a sure one. Stop when a teacher will, what he has done previously cannot be lost; and if he shall persevere, the value of the effects likely to be produced are incalculable. The minds of the children will be weekly adding to their stores of divine truth, and becoming more and more familiar with various facts and circumstances in the history of our Lord and his apostles; of the patriarchs and the prophets and the good and holy men in every age of the church. *The varied history of these individuals, and the*

diversified circumstances in which they were called to act, seen through this new practical medium, and associated in harmonious arrangement, will present, for almost every occasion in life, a parallel or a contrast, an example or a warning. Each of these will, in its turn, lodge its respective lesson, new modelled and familiarized by being adapted to the personal, domestic, or local circumstances of the learner; and being the collected treasure of the person himself, will be so well arranged, as to be ready on every suitable occasion to afford its assistance.—A new field opens also *in the exercise of prayer*. One lesson will suggest a reason for thankfulness; and the heart unburdens itself accordingly:—another points out a neglect, a deficiency, an error in ourselves; and the soul pours out its regrets and confessions with humility and shame: by another, the eyes are opened to the danger of our state, by another to the boundless extent of our wants; and the whole soul, alive to its condition, breathes out its petitions and requests with groanings which cannot be uttered.—Every lesson suggests a new want or a new plea, and thus multiplies the messages, and familiarizes the soul in seeking, with ease, desire and pleasure, to walk in the way to the throne of grace.

In this manner, the action and re-action of the child's Scripture-teaching and his daily duties and habits, will unceasingly tend to revive, to strengthen, and to perpetuate each other. Let the reader judge for himself, and say, whether a temptation to neglect public worship would not naturally bring up to his remembrance the example of our Lord given in the first lesson? Whether a temptation to negligence, unkindness, or cruelty to pa-

rents, would not suggest the others on that head; while a visitation of personal or family distress, would instantly bring before the mind the other lessons before recited, drawn from that circumstance, for his comfort, and direction, and relief.—Almost every circumstance indeed which could occur would find its counterpart, and every duty to which the child was called would find its source in the Bible. In this manner, the measuring and estimating of every thing by the standard of the Word of God settles down to a habit; while the constant recurrence of this mode of thinking, will tend still more to rivet upon the mind, and render more and more familiar, those passages of holy writ formerly studied, with all their varied suggestions and practical lessons.

But we cannot suppose, that the effects of this mode of training the young will stop even here. These early habits of observation and reflection, together with that growing strength and energy of mind consequent upon its exercise, will prepare a rich intellectual repast for the person in every stage of his future life. The thirst for improvement, though derived principally from Scripture as the fountain-head of truth, will not always be confined to its sacred pages;—but, without forgetting or neglecting these, it will soon be induced to take a wider range in collecting from *every source*, all the acquirable elements of moral and intellectual good. *Every page of every author* will be unlocked by this master-key of the mind; and the individual will be enabled to draw instruction and *pleasure* from what superficial minds can neither *penetrate* nor enjoy; and that mode of practical *reading*, recommended and illustrated in the “*Cot-*

tage Register," and "Lesson Library," will soon, we have little doubt, without trouble or effort, become both pleasant and easy. Nay, more, even books themselves will not be able to give sufficient scope to this bee-like propensity of searching for moral and intellectual sweets. The *transactions of ordinary life* will soon be laid hold of and taxed for the same purpose. Every thing in nature,—every dispensation in providence,—every occurrence in life, whether prosperous or adverse,—will be seized and examined; while the enlightened and discriminating eye of this habitual searcher after truth, will be able to discern and extract all the hidden treasures which they contain, trace them to their source, mark their present effects and their future consequences, and thus store up all those practical lessons which they are calculated to teach. The wisdom and the goodness of the Almighty will now be discerned in every thing; and it will be his daily delight to "seek them out," because he "takes pleasure in them." Every event will now bring in to the soul stores of useful and pious reflections, which will necessarily give rise to corresponding resolutions, anticipations, or hopes; and even those very circumstances in life, from which the worldly man can extract nothing but poison and death, will, to the enlightened and sanctified mind of the Christian thus trained, yield in rich abundance the delicious supplies of peace and joy.



## CHAPTER XIX.

*On the Separating and Proving of Doctrines.*

THE first and principal property in any Catechism, or any elementary book on religion, lies in its exact accordance with the *spirit of the Bible*. The words may, and indeed must vary; but the truths or doctrines, in their true meaning and spirit, should in both be exactly the same. Proof Catechisms, or the proving of doctrines, are intended to point out this connexion; and till this connexion be made obvious, no one can, or should, teach any truth as a Christian Doctrine. The doctrine may be true; yet if the mind fails to perceive its connexion with Scripture, or if the person who holds it cannot point out its source in the inspired volume, there is less feeling of obligation upon the conscience, and a much weaker conviction of sin upon the disbelief or transgression of the doctrine or duty. The proving of doctrines, then, is not that light-matter which many have supposed, and should never be prescribed where there is, either from the age or capacity of the child, or the want of proper assistance, a danger of partial, or total failure.

From this it must be obvious, that children, in the first instance, at least, *must never be left to themselves* in this important exercise; and it should only be, after they are thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines, and understand how they are to be proved, that they may be required, or permitted even to adduce additional proofs. Till they have become acquainted with the nature and import-

ance of this exercise, therefore, some class-book should be chosen corresponding to their Catechism; such as the "Hundred and Fifty Doctrines," where the Initiatory Catechisms are used, or the "New Proof Catechism," where the Shorter Catechism is taught.—These books having the doctrines in the respective Catechisms distinctly separated from the question, and proved by suitable passages from Scripture, are at once greatly helpful to the teacher, and convenient for the children's preparing their exercises at home.

Before a doctrine can be thoroughly proved to the edification of a child, three things are necessary; which, though they may not be made the subject of *regular division* in the exercise, should always be kept distinctly in view by the teacher, because a failure in *any one* of them, will destroy or prevent the accomplishment of the purpose intended. The first thing is, that the doctrine, or truth itself, be properly understood, and separated from the proposition or answer where it is found. If it be not clearly understood, and kept by itself, the proving of it must, as yet, be of little use.—The second is, that the passage by which the doctrine is to be proved be understood in its true spirit and meaning, as found in connexion with its context. If this be twisted, or forced out of its simple meaning, to effect the purpose desired, its authority, to every person of discernment, is lost, and the doctrine itself, on this very account, is brought into doubt.—The third, and principal part of this series, is the clear perception of that connexion which the doctrine has to the passage, and a conviction that, in their true spirit and meaning, the one is exactly the same as the other.—We shall endea-

your to make this as plain as possible ; and, as the Second Initiatory Catechism, besides some other practical properties, includes this one also, of great condensation of doctrine in small bounds, we shall take our illustrations from it and its "Hundred and Fifty Doctrines ; although we would again remark, that the same principles must apply to the Shorter, and to every similar Catechism.

The first thing, then, to be attended to in the exercise of proving doctrines, is the understanding and separating of them from each other in the answer to the question, or proposition repeated. In those cases where the Initiatory Catechisms have been used with their Keys, the doctrines will, at this period, be well understood ; and the only thing for the teacher now to attend to here is their separation. In the first part of the answer to the first question in the Second Initiatory Catechism, which says, "I was made of dust by the great God, who, in the beginning, for his own glory, made all things of nothing, and very good," there are five distinct doctrines, or truths, which the children should first be taught to separate before they proceed to prove them. These doctrines, on account of the rigid condensation, and the peculiar construction of the answers in the Second Initiatory Catechism for the purposes of catechising, do not stand in their natural order in the answer, but they may be separated thus :

1. All things were created by God.
2. All things were made for the glory of God.
3. God made all things of nothing.
4. Man was made of dust.
5. All things at first were made very good.

The children, by a little training, will soon be able to separate these truths, or doctrines, as well as any others in the answers to their questions, by taking them one by one as they occur in the answer,—giving each a general form, and making it a complete sentence, thus:—"We are all made of dust."—"We are all made by God;"—"God in the beginning made all things;"—"All things were made of nothing," and "God in the beginning made all things very good."—If the children should, for some time, however, feel any difficulty in doing this, the teacher may bring them gradually to perceive what is meant, and of themselves to do it, by giving the answer in small portions, adding one clause to another by degrees, and requiring the children to separate the truths in each as he goes along in the following manner:

*Teacher.* How many distinct truths or doctrines are contained in the words "I was made?"

*Scholar.* One.

*T.* How many are contained in the words, "I was made of dust?"

*S.* Two.—1st, I was made; (which needs no proof,) and 2d, I was made of dust.

*T.* How many doctrines are contained in the words, "I was made of dust by the great God?"

*S.* Three.—1st, I was made. 2d, I was made of dust; and 3d, I was made by God, &c.

This method gives a distinct and clear view of all the doctrines; and although it sometimes necessarily separates self-evident truths which do not require proof, or which are more fully proved elsewhere, yet the doctrines requiring proof can easily be arranged afterwards by themselves, for the purpose of being taken separately and proved, as in the "Hundred and Fifty Doctrines." The want

of this separation of doctrines, or something equivalent to it, has greatly circumscribed the usefulness of the Old Proof Catechism.

When the doctrines have been separated, the children should be made to prove them by passages of Scripture, the teacher taking care that these passages themselves be thoroughly understood, and their connexion with the doctrine clearly perceived. It is here also that the "Doctrines in Rhyme" should be revised in connexion with the proofs, that they may be so fixed on the memory, and so well understood, as to come readily to the recollection at any future period. The tenacity with which children retain stanzas on the memory, renders this recommendation of great importance, as, if these be now well learned and understood, there will, at no period of life, be almost any leading truth or duty, in the whole range of Christian doctrine, which, when its nature is required to be known, the child will not be able at once to give, *with all its concomitants*, in its particular section in the "Doctrines in Rhyme," or *by itself*, in the stanza of that section. He thus carries with him into life a small, but well arranged body of divinity, in such a form as to be always under his control, and which, though he be not necessitated always to quote it in the poetic form, will never fail to supply materials on any religious subject, when it is requisite to give to any one "a reason of the hope that is in him." The learning or not of these, however, may be left entirely to the discretion of the parent or teacher.

The following example will be sufficient to show how these things should be done; the lines enclosed in brackets being only intended for those

cases where the "Doctrines in Rhyme" have been learned.

*Teacher.* Who created all things?

*Scholar.* All things were created by God.

[*T.* Repeat that doctrine in Rhyme.

*S.* Th' Almighty Lord, with matchless power,  
This world at first did make,  
And all the host of heaven at once  
He into being spake.]

*T.* Prove that all things were made by God.

*S.* Gen. i. 1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

*T.* How does that prove that God at first created all things?

*S.* To us all things are included in the heavens and the earth.

*T.* Give me another proof on this point.

*S.* John i. 3. "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."

*T.* For what purpose did God make all things?

*S.* All things were made for the glory of God.

[*T.* Repeat that doctrine in Rhyme.

*S.* God for himself did all things form  
To glorify his name,  
The world, the saints, the wicked too,  
To spread abroad his fame.]

*T.* Prove that doctrine.

*S.* Prov. xvi. 4. "The Lord made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

*T.* How does this verse prove that doctrine?

*S.* It tells us distinctly, that God made all things for himself, or for his own glory.

*T.* Give me another proof.

*S.* Rom. xi. 36. "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

*T.* How does this verse prove that all things were made for the glory of God?

*S.* It proves, that all things were at first created *of*, or by God, and are preserved and kept in existence *through* him; so they have all along had a reference *to* him, or to the promotion of his glory.

*T.* Of what did God make all things?

S. God made all things of nothing.

[T. Repeat that doctrine in rhyme.

S. Creation by his powerful word,  
God did from nothing rear ;  
For things, now seen, could not be made  
By things which do appear.]

T. Prove that doctrine.

S. Heb. xi. 3. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

T. How does this verse prove that all things were made of nothing?

S. It proves that before God by his word spake the world into being, there was nothing in existence from which they could be formed.

T. Give me another proof.

S. Psal. cxlviii. 5. "Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created."

T. How does this verse prove that all things were made of nothing?

S. It proves that all things were brought into being by the command of God, and were not formed of any thing which did previously exist.

T. Of what are we all made?

S. We are all made of dust, and must return to dust again.

[T. Repeat that doctrine in Rhyme.

S. Man, formed of dust at first by God,  
Rank'd with immortals then,  
Till sin brought death, and now he dies,  
And turns to dust again.]

T. Prove that doctrine.

S. Gen. ii. 7. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."

T. How does this verse prove that doctrine.

S. It proves only the first part of it, that man was originally made of dust.

T. What is the second part of the doctrine?

S. That man shall return to dust again.

T. Prove that.

S. Gen. iii. 19. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

This, we conceive, will be a sufficient specimen of the manner in which this exercise should be conducted, in so far as regards the proofs which the children are to learn from their class-books; and when they are permitted to bring *additional proofs*, it is only necessary that sufficient care be taken that they understand the verses which they bring, as well as the connexion in which they stand to the doctrine proved.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### *On the Practical Application of Doctrines.*

THE application of the doctrines proved in Catechisms, is just another mode of expressing the deducing of practical lessons from Scripture. The difference lies only in the condensed and pointed form in which the Scripture doctrine or duty is there brought before the mind, and which, of course, makes its application the more distinct and the more easy. The application may be made either in the form of a practical reflection, or of a practical lesson, as the teacher may find most convenient. These differ principally in the mode of their expression; only, that the reflections have this convenience, that they generally embody the announcements from which the lessons or reflections arise. Thus, the application of the doctrine, that all things were made for the glory of God, if in the lesson form, would have its announcement and lesson formed thus.



*All things were made for the glory of God ;—from which we learn,*

That it should be the principal concern of our lives to live to his glory, and to make his perfections known unto others.

The application of the same doctrine, however, in the form of a practical reflection, would appear in this construction, as it does in the "Key to the Second Initiatory Catechism."

"Since all things were made for the glory of God, it should be the principal concern of my life to live to his glory, and to make his perfections known unto others."

To those who have for any time been in the habit of drawing practical lessons from Scripture passages, the application of the doctrines will be comparatively easy ; as the very announcement of the doctrine or duty frequently forms the application. For example, if the truth taught be a duty, such as obedience to parents, the practical reflection, it is plain, will just be a repetition of the doctrine itself ; thus, "Since God has commanded me to honour and obey my parents, I ought to be constantly on my guard, lest I do any thing to hurt or displease them." If it be the sanctification of the Sabbath, the reflection would run thus ; "Since God has enjoined me to sanctify the Sabbath, I should abstain from every thing of a worldly character, and spend the whole day in his worship and service."

When the truths taught, however, are more of a doctrinal, than of a practical kind, the application in that case, though not equally obvious, is far from being difficult. For example, if the doctrine taught be the goodness of God, the practical reflection naturally suggested would be something like this, "Since God is so good to me, I ought

constantly to love and serve him with all my heart." If the doctrine be his justice, the reflection suggested would be, "Since God is inflexibly just, I can never hope to escape punishment for my sins, except through Jesus Christ, who has suffered for me." This must appear obvious and easy to every one, but if any difficulty should occur, the Key to the Second Initiatory Catechism affords sufficient specimens to assist teachers in this manner of applying the doctrines.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### *On teaching Children the Shorter Catechism.*

**A KNOWLEDGE** of the doctrines in Scripture, as they are taught in the Shorter Catechism, should form part of the religious education of every child. The great value of this excellent, perhaps best of human productions, lies in the condensed form in which it presents all the leading doctrines of Scripture, and the facility it affords, even to youth, by means of its regular and systematic framework, of referring for information upon almost any question of faith or practice. This last property in the Shorter Catechism has been too much overlooked by Christians; few of whom seem to know, that every doctrine or duty in the Christian creed has its specified and regular place in this admirable little compendium. Those who will be at the trouble of making themselves acquainted with this, will see additional usefulness

and beauty in its pages. They will find that every question, as referring to articles of faith, or to points of duty, will be found respectively under one of the two great divisions of the Catechism; and as these again subdivide themselves into—what we are to believe concerning God, in creation, in providence, or in redemption;—and what is the duty of man as under the law, or as under the gospel;—in short, every question almost, which can arise in Christian doctrine, has its particular place, where it, or the doctrine corresponding to it, will be found, as shown in the Analysis prefixed to the “Key to the Shorter Catechism.”

If, therefore, the time shall ever come, when our youth in general will be rationally taught the contents of this book, we have reason to hope, that religious knowledge; practical godliness, and enlightened and extensive charity to mankind, will then begin to flourish in our land in a manner unknown from the time of the Reformation,—perhaps of the Apostles. Such a mode of teaching children, we have no doubt, will at some future period be adopted; and when adopted and persevered in, it must be successful: And why should it not be attempted by us in our own day? Were parents and teachers really sensible what would be the advantages of religious instruction thus acquired, to themselves, to their children, and to the church of Christ, they would not hesitate to make the trial. Success even in one instance, would more than compensate for all the additional trouble at first; and ultimately it would be found, that the great end of the child's religious education by means of the Shorter Catechism, would be completed, with

much less trouble either to teacher or to child, than is caused by the present mode, of learning and repeating it without understanding its contents.

The great condensation of matter in the Shorter Catechism, by involving and suspending the grammatical construction of the answers, has not only rendered its meaning exceedingly obscure, but has made it very difficult to be explained in the ordinary manner. It is this circumstance principally which renders it altogether unfit as a *first book* for children. But, even after a considerable advance in the cultivation of mind, there will still be necessary, on the part of the child, much attention, and even study, before he will be able clearly to apprehend its full meaning, and to detect the several points which are generally suspended upon the leading proposition.

To any one who will carefully look into the Shorter Catechism, and consider the involved nature of its contents, it will be evident, that a complete and minute dissection of every answer, is the only, or at least the best way of getting a child to understand it. Experience, indeed, has long attested this truth. The teacher must in some way or other reduce it into its primitive elements, in such a manner, as that *each* part may be understood by itself, and also by degrees in its connexion with the others. He must, in short, so unravel the several convolutions in the answers, and so reduce them into classes, and exhibit their parts severally and individually to the child, as will enable him, without too great a stretch or suspension of mind, not only to perceive their meaning, but by again putting the parts together, gradually arrive at the main design of the whole proposition.

To do this, however, and more particularly to make a child do it, requires considerable skill and tact on the part of a parent or teacher, and has been indeed but seldom attempted.

It is upon this principle that, for the assistance of parents and teachers, the "Exercises on the Shorter Catechism" have been composed; in which the child is made to reduce it by degrees into small portions, and is thus enabled, without mental fatigue, to examine and become acquainted with its several parts, which he himself, however, has to search for, and separate from each other after the manner of the "Key to the Initiatory Catechisms." When this has become familiar to him, and he is able to reduce the whole readily into fragments, he is then, by means of "The Paraphrase on the Shorter Catechism," made first to explain all those separate parts which appear difficult, or which need illustration; and having done so, he is made, of himself, again to put the disjointed fragments, thus explained, together, in the form of a paraphrase on the whole answer.

These objects are accomplished in two courses; first, by means of the "Exercises," and next by the "Paraphrase." The class-book for the first of these objects, consists of the Shorter Catechism in the common form, with an exercise after each question. These exercises are questions without answers, and which the child, by study at home, must be able to answer from the question before he comes to school. The "Paraphrase on the Shorter Catechism," by which he again constructs the answer, consists also of the Common Shorter Catechism, with *Explanations* of all the difficult words and phrases in the form of *Foot Notes*, after the

manner of Dr. Watts, but much fuller.—The words which are explained in the answers are printed in *Italic* characters, and the words of the explanations in the foot notes are so arranged, that the child by dropping *any one* of the *Italic* words in the answer, and substituting the words at the foot of the page, by which it is explained, gives a clear and distinct paraphrase, or exposition, of that part of the answer; and as *all*, or *any part*, may be done in the same way, the whole answer at last appears newly constructed, with its meaning the same, but much fuller and more easily understood,

These exercises are indeed much simpler in the *practice*, than they can be made to appear by any *description*. Their principles will be easiest understood by analysing a question, and exhibiting them in that manner. We shall take the thirty-first question as an example; premising, that in the child's "Exercises," the questions appear in the common form, without being divided or separated in any way; and in the "Paraphrase," the only difference is, that the words explained, are printed in *Italic* characters; and the explanations, which we have, for exhibiting their nature, put in the same line with the words explained, appear in the shape of notes at the foot of the page. In the "Teacher's Paraphrase," the paraphrase is completely formed, as well as the explanations given, but this is merely for *his* accommodation, and is, both on account of the expense, as well as the impolicy of the thing, never given to the child.

**Q. 31. What is Effectual Calling?**

1. Effectual Calling is the
2. Work of
3. God's Spirit,

4. Whereby
5. *Convincing us*—assuring us and making us sensible
6. of our sin and
7. *Misery*,
8. *Enlightening*—making known to, or instructing
9. our minds in
10. the knowledge
11. of Christ, and
12. *renewing* } giving us new desires after holiness, and resolu-
13. *our wills*, } tions of amendment.
14. he doth *persuade*—incline our hearts
15. and *enable us*—give us strength and ability
16. to *embrace*—accept of, and cling to
17. Jesus Christ,
18. Freely offered
19. to us
20. in the *Gospel*—good news of salvation made known in the Bible.

We need not again explain, that the above dissection of the answer is not intended to exhibit the *form* of the “exercises” on the Shorter Catechism, but only to explain their *principle*. The following, however, is an exact copy of the exercise, with the exception of the figures, which we have placed after each question, to show those parts of the above dissection, from which the child must of himself glean the answer, and to point out to the teacher how he is to instruct the child to do so.

What is effectual calling said to be? (2) Whose work is effectual calling? (3) Of what does the Spirit convince us in effectual calling? (6, 7) Who convinces us of sin in effectual calling? (3) Of what else does the Spirit convince us, besides sin? (7) What is done to the mind in effectual calling? (8) In what is the mind enlightened in effectual calling? (10, 11) What is enlightened in effectual calling? (9) Who enlightens the mind in effectual calling? (3) In the knowledge of whom does the Spirit enlighten our mind in effectual calling? (11) What is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ? (9) What is done to the will in effectual calling?

(12) Who renews our wills in effectual calling? (3) What is renewed in effectual calling? (13) To what are we persuaded in effectual calling? (16, 17) Whom are we persuaded to embrace? (17) Who persuades us to embrace Jesus Christ? (3) What else does the Spirit do besides persuading us to embrace Jesus Christ; (15) What does the spirit enable us to do? (16, 17) Who enables us to embrace Jesus Christ? (3) In what is Christ offered to us? (20) To whom is Christ offered in the gospel? (19) In what manner is Christ offered to us in the gospel? (18)

In how many steps does effectual calling consist? (*in five.*) What is the first step in effectual calling? (5, 6, 7) Of what is the sinner convinced? (6, 7) What is the second step in effectual calling? (8, 9, 10, 11) In what does the Spirit enlighten our minds? (10, 11) What is the third step in effectual calling? (12, 13) What does the Spirit renew in effectual calling? (13) What is the fourth step in effectual calling? (14, 16, 17) Whom are we persuaded to embrace in effectual calling? (17) What is the fifth and last step in effectual calling? (15, 16, 17) What does the Spirit enable us to do in effectual calling? (16, 17)

The "Paraphrase" is the next step to the understanding of the Shorter Catechism. In the foregoing dissection the reader will perceive some words in No. 5, 8, &c. printed in italics. The explanations of these words appear here for convenience on the same line with the words explained, but they are, in the "Paraphrase" used by the children, found as foot notes. If the reader will take any of those lines in which the italic words are found, and substitute the explanation for the word, or words themselves, he will find, that by that means the sense becomes more obvious and plain. For example, we would read thus, "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby *assuring us, and making us sensible* of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ," &c. Or thus, "Effectual calling is



the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, *making known, or instructing* our minds in the knowledge of Christ," &c. Or the whole answer would read thus,—

*Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby [assuring us, and making us sensible] of our sin and misery, [making known to, or instructing] our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and [giving us new desires after holiness, and resolutions of amendment,] he doth [incline our hearts] and [give us strength and ability] to [accept of and cling to] Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the [good news of salvation made known in the Bible.]*

From what we have said above, the method of using both these exercises will be obvious. The Catechetical Exercises should be used in a similar manner to that recommended for the Second Initiatory Catechism, chap. xiv. p. 82, to which we refer; and as to the "Paraphrase," should any thing farther be requisite, the method of using it will be found on each copy, and in the Key to the Shorter Catechism, to which we also refer. We would here only add, what will perhaps surprise some, but which experience will uniformly confirm, that the Shorter Catechism will be soonest learned, as well as understood, by the children's using their books in all the above exercises upon it, previous to their committing it to memory.—We merely throw out this as a hint which may be received or rejected by every one as he finds convenient or suitable.

## CHAPTER XXII.

*On Teaching the Proof Catechism to Children.*

IN teaching the *common* Proof Catechism, the design of the book is almost universally overlooked. The children learn the proofs, but they are seldom able to show the connexion of these proofs with the answer, or to point out how the doctrines there stated are founded upon Scripture authority. The principal reason of this will at once appear; if we consider what was formerly said about the children not understanding the doctrine stated. They never can *prove* what they do not *understand*.

But even when the doctrines in the answer are understood, the teaching of the Proof Catechism, in the manner usually done, generally fails of the desired effect from two causes. First, because of the particular doctrine to be proved not having been previously separated; and next, from the child's attention being forced away from the principal object,—that of proving the doctrine, and marking its connexion with Scripture,—by his anxiety to *repeat* the proofs, which are sometimes both difficult and laborious.

The sentiment we believe is almost universal, that the common proofs for the Shorter Catechism are rather general, and circumscribed as to their number. To have extended them might indeed have increased the size of the book, but it would have made it more complete. This, however, is just one reason among many why, where the old Proof Catechism continues to be used, their use and bearing on each doctrine should be distinctly

pointed out by the teacher, and thoroughly understood by the scholar.

To show the connexion of the doctrines in the Shorter Catechism with Scripture, is a matter of great importance in the religious instruction of children. It is that by which they will be able to give a reason of the faith that is in them; and the author has often been surprised why this important part of a young Christian's education has been so universally neglected. The "New Proof Catechism" supplies the desideratum so long wanted and no pains should be spared to make children master of its contents.

In this Catechism the doctrines taught in the Shorter Catechism are taken severally from the answers, and each is proved by an appropriate passage from Scripture; and this exercise being in all respects similar to those of the Second Initiatory Catechism, the same directions will apply here which were given with respect to them. We would only suggest, the propriety of children being taken at least once through this Catechism with the book in their hand,—the teacher making them read both doctrine and passage, and pointing out their connexion. This should always be done at least *once* previous to committing them to memory, and could be effected without in the least curtailing or interrupting any one of their other exercises.

Of the application of the doctrines we need say nothing, as the former remarks with regard to the Second Initiatory Catechism on that subject, apply with equal force here, and will be equally easy of application by the teacher. Should any difficulty remain as to the method of successfully teaching

the Shorter Catechism in all its points, we would refer to the Introduction to the "Key" to that book, where the whole is treated at length with great perspicuity and force, and where every information which may be necessary will be found.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### *On Teaching the Larger Catechism.*

Not many years ago, the use of the Larger Catechism in the religious education of children, would have been considered as a chimera. It is, however, that last step in the education of youth, the want of which will soon be considered a desideratum. The use of the Shorter Catechism in the manner before pointed out, will not only make the Larger Catechism more easily understood, but in many cases, will render the mere reading of it with attention, sufficient to imprint the substance of it upon the memory. The truth of this will at once be evident, by comparing any of the answers in the Shorter Catechism, with the corresponding answers in the Larger, where the additional matter in the last mentioned treatise, will be found to illustrate and amplify the former.

This catechism ought to be gone over in the same way as was recommended to be done with respect to the Shorter. A separate edition has been printed with a paraphrase in the form of notes, as in the case of the Shorter Catechism, and the same kind of exercise ought to be pursued;—with *this difference*, however, that if any of the older

scholars, from occupation or otherwise, have little or no leisure for committing it to memory, they ought to be indulged with the book, and allowed to read and explain. More freedom should be allowed to persons at their time of life, than to children. The teacher ought, therefore, to encourage such to engage in these exercises, by making them not only profitable, but pleasant and easy. By this means many may acquire such a relish for these exercises, as to persevere in them, by themselves, or in connexion with others, long after they have, from shame to appear there as scholars, left their schools.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### *On Teaching Children the Elements and Practice of Prayer.*

PRAYER is a most solemn duty, demanding from every one who engages in its exercise the full concentration of every thought of the mind, the control and mastery of every affection and desire of the heart, and a complete abstraction, for the time, from all worldly cares, and pleasures, and vanities. If the holy angels in heaven, in their approaches to the Almighty, cover their faces with their wings, how much more imperative is it on us, sinful creatures of the dust, to approach him with sincerity and with godly fear.

While we take this rational and Scriptural view of the solemnity of prayer, however, we must, at the same time, beware that we do not turn it to

abuse. We must be careful that our zeal for the proper performance of a duty do not prevent or impede its regular and constant exercise.—Prayer is a moral duty,—a natural duty,—and therefore it is obligatory on all to pray. No want of solemnity,—no alienation of affection from God and holiness,—no absorption of mind in worldly cares or pursuits, will, or can excuse the neglect of prayer. Nay, such sins will be but aggravated and rendered still more heinous, on account of its neglect.

It is then incumbent on parents and teachers, not only to *teach* their children to pray, but in this, as in every other moral duty, they ought to take such measures as will ensure its performance. Children must be invited to pray,—induced to pray,—nay, even *commanded* to pray. Some will doubt the propriety,—perhaps the lawfulness of doing so. We cannot here stop to discuss the subject; but referring to “The Elements and Practice of Prayer,” where this point is examined and settled, we will here take it for granted, what few it is hoped will dispute, that children, even before conversion, should pray, and therefore that they ought to be *taught* to pray.

The general neglect of this important part of a child's religious education, in the last and present generation, is too obvious; and many who are called, and we would in charity hope are, good and pious Christians, most bitterly lament and mourn over that criminal neglect in their own case. Secret prayer they have cultivated, and do cultivate, but social prayer is what many of them have never yet been able to engage in with ease or comfort to themselves, or with improvement to others. Their physical nature, they seem to think, cannot

now overcome this backwardness; and the consequence is, the frequent or constant neglect of family worship, the want of much comfort and enjoyment in Christian fellowship, with leanness of soul, a wounded conscience, and a doubting mind.

But even in those cases where some attention has been paid to this duty by parents, the manner in which it is sometimes gone about is not only at variance with every principle of common sense, but has frequently without perhaps their perceiving it, tended to establish, in the minds and feelings of the children, a practical error of a most mischievous and dangerous kind. Prayer is, and must be, purely an intellectual and spiritual exercise;—an expression of *desire*, or, if that be wanting, an expression of regret and humility for *the want of desire*; and every substitute for this mental and spiritual approach to God in the matter of prayer, is but a name,—a mere delusion,—an insult to the great Searcher of hearts, to whom we thus “draw nigh with the lips, while the heart” and the mind have been wholly unconcerned. But when we begin to investigate the matter, as appearing in practice, what do we find? Children are taught to approach the awful Majesty of heaven and earth without one desire, one request, one expression of feeling, or indeed without an intellectual exercise of any kind, from the beginning to the end of what are most unwisely and untruly called *their prayers*.—They repeat their little forms of words upon their knees with much decorum, and perhaps with an seeming reverence; but they know not what they say. The mind,—the rational and immortal part of the child,—has no share in the exercise. The parent knows this, and knows that the child

ceives it to be so, and yet he tells his little one that *this is prayer*. Nay, some have even carried the absurdity to its utmost limit, and we have actually seen children on their knees repeating, by mere rote, psalms and hymns as substitutes for even the form of a prayer. How low must the opinion of the spirituality or omniscience of God soon become, even to a child, when he is thus taught, that his worship consists in external form and sound, without the mind or the heart taking any part in it! It is indeed a contrast even to the prayers of the heathen. With them there is the living form of devotion presented to a dead idol; while here there is a dead and senseless form offered as devotion to the living God. The mere exposure of such an evil is a sufficient rebuke for its practice; and when once pointed out to the sincere Christian parent or teacher in its true light, it will, without doubt, be immediately amended.

We anticipate the question which will immediately be asked by every parent who feels interested in the subject. "What can we do in this case, before the child's mind is arrived at that state of maturity in which it is capable of prayer?"—But we would in reply ask, "When is that?"—We frequently deceive ourselves by circumscribing the capacities of children; and we would say, that so soon as a child can be made to understand that he has a God who formed him and gave him being, who is also his father and mother's God, who can make him and them good and happy, and who is always present though unseen; *then* is the child capable of engaging in prayer, and may from the heart, and with the understanding, on his knees, and with closed eyes and uplifted hands,



truly and devoutly pray thus; "O God make me a good child; and make me and my father and my mother good and happy." The first sentence itself indeed would be a good beginning; and additions may be made by degrees, as the child shall be able to comprehend them. He must, in short, be taught to pray to God for spiritual blessings, in the same manner that he is taught to apply to his parents for his food;—with this difference, that as in the one case, nature prompts him to be urgent and persevering in his requests till they be granted, his spiritual wants, by reason of his natural depravity and blindness, must be gradually made known to him, and he be directed and urged to apply to God through Jesus Christ, as the only source of their supply.

From this it is obvious, that the first step in teaching a child to pray, is to give him some idea of God, his greatness, goodness, and love for children; and then, gradually revealing to him his wants, teach him to form them into words, and take them to God in the exercise of prayer, that he may have them supplied. For this purpose, every truth which he is taught from his catechism, and every lesson which he draws from Scripture should be made use of, and he be instructed to turn them into prayer. The use which should be made of Scripture lessons in this exercise we have already exemplified; but long before children are capable of this, they should by means of their *little catechisms* be instructed in prayer. The "First Initiatory Catechism," amongst its other useful properties for children, embraces this one also, that almost every answer which a child repeats may, by a slight alteration of the language, be made a part

of prayer; and the whole, indeed, taken consecutively, forms what might be called a complete doctrinal prayer, as will be seen from the following example. To put the *whole* together, however, in this manner, would be quite improper; but the teacher should so form them one by one, at different times, and teach the child to intersperse them with his other petitions, that, by gradually becoming acquainted with the whole, he may be able to apply *any* of them, which at the time may be most suitable for his purpose. Where a child is thus taught to pray *with the understanding*, his continuing to do so will, we have no doubt, secure for him that which God has promised to bestow, but which his parents or teachers cannot give,—that is, the influences of the Holy Spirit, which will enable him to pray with *the heart also*.

The following then is a specimen how children may be taught to turn the answers of the "First Initiatory Catechism" into prayer; to which we would particularly call the attention of parents and teachers, and by comparing these with the answers, in that Catechism, which are referred to by the figures, they will find that the words remain in nearly the same order as in the Catechism. They will thus be enabled easily to adopt this method of teaching their little ones to approach God acceptably in prayer; and as from the foregoing pages it is understood that the children are acquainted with the meaning of the answers, they also will be able easily and pleasantly to adopt this course, as soon as they are acquainted with the method of doing it.

"O Lord, (1) thou who didst at first make all things of nothing, (3) hast made me also that I might serve thee always.

But I confess that (7) I sin against thee, and every day, and (8) because of sin, I deserve anger for ever.—(10) I am dead in sin and cannot—(11) Sorrow for sin will not satisfy thy justice cannot save me; and (12) my best work with sin, and deserve punishment, &c. &c.

“But we bless thee that (13) thou thyself hast found the way to save sinners, by (14) Jesus Christ thy Son who (15) became man, kept thy law, and died for me, &c. &c.

“We thank thee that (21) salvation is thy gift to all men.—Help me, O Lord, (23) to believe and to trust in him alone for salvation, with faith which is known by producing good works, &c. &c.

“Give me, O Lord, (25) that true repentance for sin and hatred of it, which will make me forsake it, and desire to obey thee,” &c. &c.

When children have arrived at ten years of age, they ought then, according to capacity, to be instructed in the nature and practice of this duty more systematically, and a separate class should be formed in every school for this purpose. The teacher's first business should be to instruct them in the nature of prayer, and to explain its different parts; a confession, thanksgiving, petition, &c. as in “Questions on Prayer,” which may be used as the class-book. The examples for each part of prayer, should be carefully read by each scholar, and additional ones should be made at home by themselves, and brought in to be read.

When they have in this manner been made acquainted with the *elements* of prayer, they should next be trained to its *practice*. This should be done, not by teaching them *forms* of prayer, but by pointing out to them how their religious feelings are to be used in its extemporaneous

as has been already illustrated in the example, p. 124, and as will be found in the "Help to the Acts," "The Help to Genesis," &c. Their first attempts before their teacher and companions should be exceedingly short, perhaps one, or two petitions only, either selected from the "Questions on Prayer,"—from their catechism,—from a text of Scripture,—or from their present circumstances, in this manner, "O Lord, teach and help us to pray.—Bless our present meeting, and enable us to improve by its exercises, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen." In this way they will gradually attain confidence; and by adding one petition to another, and then introducing by degrees the other parts of prayer as they can understand and apply them, the exercises will progressively become more familiar, orderly, and solemn. If necessary, but not otherwise, particular children may be permitted to use a written prayer formed by themselves, till they can find sufficient courage to do without it; but this will but seldom, if ever, be necessary; and we can assure our readers, from long experience, that by pursuing this course for only a few weeks or months, the children will soon, with ease and comfort to themselves, and with much acceptance to others, be able, without perturbation and with solemnity, of themselves to engage before their companions in this delightful duty.

The above is but a rude outline of what may be done;—and, again referring the reader to "The Elements and Practice of Prayer," where the whole subject is fully treated in its design, progress, and effects, we shall here conclude with an extract from that book, on the probable consequences to

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the children of such a course of teaching becoming general.

"All who have had experience in this matter, and who are familiar in the religious instruction of children, know, and many who read this will also, in their own experience, attest its truth, that at a very early stage of religious knowledge, the feelings of children are often in a very lively manner excited, and in some measure alarmed, by even the indistinct glimpses which their faculties are capable of getting of their guilt and danger by sin; while at other times the anxious countenance and sparkling eye,—the suspended breath making its way at intervals in low sighs through half-opened lips,—when the kindness and love of God and the Saviour are made known to them, distinctly reveal to the discerning teacher, that a mental and moral operation of no ordinary kind is going on within. These are seasons, when by the secret, and almost imperceptible operations of the Spirit of God upon the soul, the child faintly perceives the emotions of a grateful heart darkly feeling its way to its great Benefactor, and which, had prayer been but familiar, would, we have no doubt, have burst forth in all the plenitude of pious devotion. These emotions, however, from ignorance of the nature, or want of exercise in this duty, are often repressed, perhaps altogether quenched, and generally pass over without that improvement and culture of which they are so very susceptible.

"A spirit and a habit of prayer, it must be obvious, would not have failed to have improved such opportunities; and if so, have we not reason to believe, nay, we have the assurance,—that

who heareth the young ravens when they cry, would not have rejected the rising aspirations of these young immortals. It must then be exceedingly hurtful to the children, to neglect the cultivation and strengthening of this powerful auxiliary to the teacher's labours;—and we are inclined to believe, that ignorance of this duty, and the neglect of its exercise are, in many cases, a principal cause of the pupil's continuance in sin, notwithstanding all the endeavours and the prayers of those who are engaged in his instruction.—

“Reader, if you are a parent, or a teacher, and have hitherto neglected to instruct and exercise your pupils in this exercise, you have yourself to blame, perhaps, for much, or most of the heart-burnings, and grief, and despondency, which have very probably mixed with your labours. You knew, that all your success must come from above, and that this success is to be expected only in answer to prayer. *You* have prayed for success; and these prayers will not be altogether in vain. But you ought to have considered, that at a throne of grace, two are better than one; and that while you, very properly, by your supplications were importuning God to bless your endeavours, and to be propitious to your pupils, you were neglecting to employ, for that same purpose, an instrument appointed by God himself,—more honoured by promise, and of course much more weighty and powerful in effect, than any appeal which you could make in their behalf. That instrument was the *prayers of the children themselves*. They at a throne of grace for themselves, could have plead promises,—special promises,—which you in their behalf could not use. You are permitted and en-

joined to pray for them; to be instant in prayer, and to be persevering in prayer for a blessing on your labours; but still, even in answer to the fervent and earnest persevering prayer of faith, *your* part of the promise is only general, that your labour shall not be in vain: But *how*, or *when*, or *who*, they are, that by your means, shall be saved, is known only to God; but if, by the influence and blessing of the Spirit of God, *any one child* should be taught and enabled to put up such a prayer for himself;—if he shall be induced and drawn to approach the throne of divine grace, with faith and earnestness in his *own* behalf,—then is the promise to *that* child special and immutable; for the God of truth hath affirmed, that “they who seek him *early* SHALL find him.”

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### *On Exercises suitable for Retaining and Benefiting Advanced Scholars.*

THERE is a period in the education of young persons when they themselves begin to suppose, that they are too old to rank as scholars in the exercise of the Sabbath evenings, and feel reluctant to take their seats, or to be considered on a level with their younger companions. It is no exaggeration to pronounce this the most critical period in the whole course of their lives. It is about this season, that the good or the evil of future life is *generally* commenced and determined; for it will in *most* cases be found, that according to the com-

pany now adopted, the sentiments now cherished and acted upon, and the habits now formed, so will be the character at thirty, fifty, and seventy years of age.—There are exceptions, no doubt,—but they are only *exceptions*.

This is a period then, which should always be anticipated by the Sabbath school teacher. The first indications of backwardness in any of the scholars in attending the school, or of engaging in its exercises, should be watched by him with much solicitude. The half turned side when standing up with his companions, the biting of the under lip, and the shy upcast or downcast side glance away from the teacher, with a wriggling restlessness of motion when repeating his exercises, are all indications in the scholar of wounded dignity, and are generally the harbingers of irregular attendance and final desertion. At or before the time, therefore, when these symptoms begin to make their appearance, the teacher should be prepared to engage him in a series of exercises, and among companions, more congenial both to his age and his capacity.

From what has been already recommended in a former part of this work, it will appear, that one way of commencing such a course with the older scholars is to place a few of the younger children under their care and tuition, and in this manner not only to retain them in the school, under the influence of its exercises and the eye of their teacher, but also to make them useful both to themselves and to the children.

This however, though it might do for a time, would, in any one school, fail from want of room and want of pupils. There would, in a few years,



be more teachers than children; and the object of this chapter is to point out a plan, for receiving and training these older scholars, which may be capable of universal adoption.

This meeting should consist of two divisions of classes, who are to meet in the same place, and engage in the same exercises. The youngest class, should consist of your scholars who are recommended by some Sabbath teachers or committee, each of whom can be relied on to behave well, and to perform the exercises of the meeting. The section should never, in ordinary cases, exceed twelve, and are uniformly to be selected by the teacher from the first class.

The exercises for the scholars consist principally in attending to, and being catechised upon the religious subject given out by the teacher at the beginning of each meeting;—in writing exercises upon the subject during the week;—in the members of the second class reading their exercises;—at the close of the meeting, solemnly engaging in prayer, at the pointment of the teacher, in the exercise of devotion. We shall first describe the order of exercises at each meeting, and then offer a few remarks upon each of its several parts.

When the members are met, and a psalm or a hymn has been sung, one of the members of the first class is called on by the teacher to pray. Prayer is never to be considered in the light of a task, or trial of skill, but is to be engaged in as a solemn act of devotion, and should always be pointed out, and adapted to the place and circumstances of the meeting. When any hint of devotion is necessary, it should always be

the teacher privately to the individual himself.—The teacher then calls for the exercises prepared during the week by the members of the *first class* which he puts aside to be taken with him, and returns the exercises received from them in the same manner at the last meeting. Having previously selected one or two, (not more) as the best of these, he now requests the writers, as a mark of his approbation, to read them aloud to the meeting.—A short prayer from a member of *either* class, concludes this first part of the exercises.

The members of the second class are now called on for their exercises, which should be short, and, if necessary, of a certain prescribed length, to be read in such order as may appear best to the teacher, who approves, or remarks very shortly upon each, and calls upon the next, till the whole have been read; when one or two general remarks on the subject, as there may be time, and another short prayer from one of the second class, conclude this *second* part of the exercises of the meeting.

The teacher now gives out the subject for next meeting, which should be one selected from, or connected with, the exercises of the Sabbath School, if the meeting be attached to one; and if it be attached to several, the use of the Task-Roll will here be peculiarly useful. The subject should always consist of a very simple proposition, easily understood, and capable of being separated into parts, or divisions,—of which we shall immediately speak. Having announced the subject, he divides it into its several parts, and then proceeds to catechise the members of the *first class* upon them; while the members of the second class are recom-

mended, if they deem it requisite, to take notes of what they think necessary to assist their memories. When the first class have all, by examination, become familiar with the *general* divisions, the teacher then takes each division by itself, subdivides it if necessary, and very shortly explains its nature, and shows its connexion with the subject as a whole. He then catechises the first class again on *this* part, before proceeding to another, securing their understanding of each, before taking up the next. He then discusses the others in the same manner till all have been explained; and lastly, but *very shortly*, he applies the subject, and himself concludes with prayer.

Having in this manner described the mode of procedure *during* the meetings, it may now be necessary, in order that the reader may have a better idea of the principles by which it is regulated, that we make a few explanatory remarks on some of the parts taken separately, in which the exercises consist. This will be the more useful, as some teachers may find it prudent to adopt another mode of carrying on similar operations, and may be in danger, while changing the mode, of departing from the principles,—which long experience has, by the uniformity of their success, now established to be sound.

With respect to the *two classes*, the teacher must act upon the apparent principle of making the first class the objects of his *tuition*,—the second class rather as his *friends* and *co-adjutors*;—and should, by every prudent means, endeavour to impress this idea on both. For this purpose, the members of his second class should have their seats *with him, ranged*, if it can conveniently be done,

on his right and left hand, while the first class take their places in front. He should always treat these members of the second class with deference and respect, more as friends than as scholars, sometimes, perhaps, asking their opinion on the division of a subject, or the method of treating it, and in every possible way, endeavouring to excite in their minds a sense of mental, as well as moral dignity. In short, he should let them feel, that they are now men and Christians; and that, as his friends, they have a character to lose. Some may suppose that all this will generate feelings of pride. Such a supposition is quite unfounded. The emotion thus excited is not at all allied to *pride*, but is of a very different character. It is a feeling of moral worth, amiable in itself, and most beneficial in its exercise. It is no doubt capable of excess, and even of abuse; but we speak of the principle;—and it is a good one.—Nearly twenty years' experience has confirmed this.

The first class should be treated also with deference; more, however, in the character of scholars or learners, but with the prospect of being soon, perhaps, raised to the second class on a vacancy occurring. They should each be enjoined to write on every subject given out, however short their exercises may be; and the supplying of a vacancy in the second class should, in general, be according to the general merit of individuals, although, in some special cases, it may be by competition on a prescribed subject. In this way, they will be induced to exert themselves weekly, knowing that the object of their desire is to be attained by diligence.

*The vacancies will, and should frequently oc-*

cur in the second class, by the members being employed as Sabbath School teachers or assistants; and when they are thus secured to the Christian public and the church of Christ, they should then vacate their seats; and though they may continue to write and attend *as friends*, yet they should never read their exercises at ordinary meetings, or be considered as members; but should give place to those of the first class who have now been elected.

With respect to the young people *engaging in prayer* before their teacher and companions, some may perhaps think that this is impracticable.— This is a rash conclusion; and experience will testify, that a matured capacity of public prayer will be one of the most beneficial consequences resulting from these meetings. If the members have been trained in the manner recommended in a previous chapter, even those of the first class will feel little hesitation; but those of the second especially will conduct this duty with readiness and pleasure. One will naturally stimulate another to this exercise; and we have ourselves, in witnessing such meetings, frequently been delighted with the warmth and zeal, and seemingly genuine devotion, which pervaded the addresses even of those who appeared incapable of such pious effusions.

The *selecting and prescribing of exercises* for these meetings is certainly the most difficult part of the teacher's duty; but even this is in a great measure imaginary. Instead of attempting great things, the teacher should principally study simplicity, and endeavour to lay open his subject in the plainest manner. As writing upon any doctrine will be to some of the pupils a thing entirely *new*, and of course in their opinion pregnant

with immense difficulty, he will best induce them to commence with spirit by presenting it to their consideration in a clear and simple point of view. Their success, indeed, will almost universally depend upon a strict adherence to this rule. If they are once taught to fix their attention exclusively upon the subject,—to separate, one by one, the several ideas which it contains,—and to state them in the same order,—they will soon become able and fluent writers; but if this be neglected, their progress will be slow in proportion. The teacher's great aim, therefore, in selecting and dividing his subject, should be simplicity and perspicuity.

It may be satisfactory and useful for the teacher to be able to trace the progress of his pupils in these exercises, that he may suit his directions and advices to their changing circumstances. He will perceive the members of the first class gradually pass through the three following stages in their progress, with some variety of course, but each distinctly marked, and gradually approaching and running into each other.

The *first stage* in this progress of writing by these young unlettered scholars, is the most disheartening. In this their writing appears exceedingly crude, and much more disjointed and unconnected in the sentences than would be observed even in their oral communications on the same subject. The whole appears as if at the commencement of each sentence the pupil had been forced to the acknowledgment of, "I do not know what to say!" and when a thought is put into words, it is generally lengthened out by expletives and unnecessary words, inserted evidently for the mere purpose of filling the paper and making an ap-

pearance. In this case, the teacher's duty is to encourage his pupil to perseverance, as by far the greatest difficulty which he has to overcome is at this part of his progress. He should show him how, by writing a simple sentence upon each particular of his subject, he accomplishes what is required of him; and inform him, that he must never estimate either his ability or his progress by the quantity of paper which he fills. Let him endeavour to remember one idea on each of the several parts of the subject, and, if no other occurs, let him write that, and then stop. He will soon be able to increase them; but they should never be either forced or foreign to the subject.

The *second stage* of his pupil's progress, is one considerably in advance. It has been gradually forming and acquiring strength, as the difficulties peculiar to the first stage, have been overcome. Its characteristic is a constant desire to digress. The pupil has now acquired a considerable command of words, although there is still evidently a scarcity of distinct ideas. He now writes more freely, although he sometimes indulges in high-sounding words and long sentences, tacked together without much order, and evidently with the fear of losing any part of what had at the time occurred to him on the subject. His great fault however in this stage, and what must be particularly guarded against by the teacher, is the inclination he experiences, and to which he too often yields, of leaving his main object, and indulging in a rambling manner without much restraint. Every new idea which he happens to come upon in the prosecution of his purpose, induces him to start away from the subject he is considering, and to pursue it

to its utmost limits. In doing this, another perhaps equally good occurs, and the same thing again takes place, till he seems at last to have forgotten upon what subject he began to write.—The teacher's business here is to regulate, rather than to check or dishearten; to show him the necessity, at all events, of keeping strictly to his main object, and should assist in detecting the precise point of divergence, and the particular idea which tempted him to leave it. If this error should be long persevered in, it might be proper for the teacher once or twice to draw his pen through all the extraneous matter in the exercise, and let him see how barren he is on the prescribed exercise; and at the same time to explain to him, that the perfection of these exercises, and the improvement to be derived from them, consists principally in their unity, and the rigid adherence of the scholars to one object at a time.

The *third and last stage* consists, not only in a great command of language, but of a superabundance of ideas. The pupil finds, that it is time to stop before he has perhaps finished the first division of his subject, which, as a whole, is in this manner left upon his mind unequal and disjointed. His ideas flow in upon him so rapidly and clearly, that he thinks himself in some measure inexhaustible; and by and by, his exercises acquire such a length as render it quite impossible to read the whole.—As this stage advances, the teacher must show the pupil the impropriety of writing *all that he can*, or of inserting every idea which presents itself on the subject. He should be made to perceive the necessity, the importance of *selecting* his ideas, of throwing out every one which does not bear di-

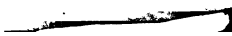


rectly on the point; and even of those which do so, the best, and the best only, should be chosen, and arranged in proper order. Condensation and perspicuity must now be constantly enjoined by the teacher, and invariably aimed at and practised by the scholars. None but those who have arrived at this stage should, in ordinary cases be admitted into the second class.

The *selection* of his subject, as we before hinted, should be a portion, or member of some part of the Sabbath School's exercise, consisting of a doctrine, a promise, a duty, or any passage of Scripture connected with the exercises for the evening. Suppose, for example, the first question of the Shorter Catechism formed part of these, the teacher should take a member of it, the most important member or branch, or that which could be treated of in the simplest manner, and portion it out, as before mentioned, for his pupils. He might either take the first idea in that question, that "the design of man's creation was the glory of God;" or the second, "that the enjoyment of God forms the chief happiness of man."—If he take the first, he might divide it in this way: 1st, Inquire why God designed his own glory in the creation of man: 2d, What is the duty of man on this account: and 3d, What will be the consequences of not answering the end of his creation: When the first class, that they may the better understand and remember them, have been thoroughly catechised on *these three points generally*, the teacher should then take up the first by itself, and show, very shortly, how it is that God, being infinitely great as well as infinitely wise, must, according to our conceptions of his character, conduct his operations for

the manifestation of his glory. Wisdom always chooses the *best end*, as well as the *best means*. and it would have been an impeachment of the wisdom of God, had he designed any end beneath this one, which is evidently the greatest and the best,—that is, the manifestation of his own glory as the only infinite God. This he should state once or twice in different forms, making several of the first class repeat the idea in their own words, till he think that they understand it. Then taking up the second, show what is the duty of man on this account. This he may subdivide thus,—1st, We ought each of us to search the Scriptures, that we may know how we are to live to the glory of God; and, 2d, When we know how we can promote God's glory, we should make every thought, and every word and action bend to this great leading principle. Upon these he catechises them in the same manner; and then taking up the third, he would show, that in neglecting the glory of God, we are defeating the design of our creation, dishonouring God, destroying our happiness, and ruining our souls. These he causes the young people of the first class to repeat again and again, going to the general divisions, and then to the subdivisions; after which he enjoins them to write *what they can remember*, and to add a few thoughts of *their own* on each part of the subject. The second class have, of course been paying attention to these operations, and some perhaps taking notes for their own use through the week, but they are especially enjoined to have their exercises short and pointed on each part of the subject.

With respect to the *remarks made after the reading of the exercises*, there will be much prudence



requisite on the part of the teacher, should be pointed out, be given according to the clear and simplicity of the exercises;—*tion* which he conceives has been adhered to, than sprightliness or the decorative matters foreign to the useful nature of a religious exercise not be prudent *directly* to disanile flowers; but if the teacher not giving the praise expecting every occasion to counter style in the illustration and in the investigation of pupils will soon begin of their imaginations, and to give them which, though it cost perhaps more profitable to themselves acceptable to their teacher.

When the first class gives writing, the teacher should or, if he has confidence in or rather of some of the *to it*, he may get their a few to each, request them of the week, and at the write any remark which it, signing their names, there made. This will create another bond of those friends who, having more regular exercises such link as this to keep

A quarterly, or half-yearly meeting, of all the present and former members should also be held, in which one or two clerical friends should be present,\* when some one or more of the old members, appointed for the purpose, should read an exercise, or exercises. This tends much to the encouragement of the present members, who will be gratified by hearing the able exercises of those who formerly filled their places, and will not fail to excite a spirit of emulation of the best and most powerful kind.

In conclusion, we would remark, that if this little treatise shall fall into the hands of some warm hearted young and pious Christian, ambitious of doing good, and zealous of being privately useful in the church and to the people of Christ, we would almost venture to assure him or *her* (for this mode of teaching has not been altogether confined to one sex,) of success, by adopting and persevering, under the divine guidance and blessing, in a course similar to that recommended above. Exhortations to perseverance would, in a short time, be scarcely necessary. He would thus at the most important season of youth,—the spring-time of life,—be the means of turning the stream of the thoughts, and views, and hopes of the young, into the channel of religion, and in this manner of securing them from being entangled by many of the vanities and temptations of life to which they must necessarily be exposed; while, by their improvement in practical godliness, and their scrupulous attention to the relative duties of their station,—consequent upon that feeling of moral and intellectual dignity which success in their exercises will almost uniformly create,—they would be suc-

cessfully led step by step in their Christian journey, and be daily more and more fortified against the allurements of sin, and better prepared for countering or enduring the difficulties or privations of life.

But this is not all;—he might, by the blessing of God upon his labours, prepare for himself at some future period of his life, a perpetual gratification, of which the most ambitious voluptuary in usefulness might well envy him the possession. He would soon perceive of what the human mind is capable, when properly and usefully exerted, and when its faculties are fairly brought into exercise. Might he not, sometimes discover among his pupils, and be enabled judiciously to draw out, talents of a superior order and great promise, undid, perhaps, from common observation, and thoughtless inactivity and childish indifference, and where, but for these or similar exercises, they might perhaps have lain for ever. Such men require but a sight and a feeling of their own capabilities, to spring at once into a new and matured existence. Give them this feeling of their own power and strength, point them out the way, and set them fairly on the wing, and they will mount with a vigour and to a height which would have been thought at one time to be impossible. And will the thorny pillow of decrepitude of age not be comforted and cheered by the possession of such enlightened friends, and gifted individuals, who, in the lapse of years, have in this manner been gathered about him?—Will there not be satisfaction, grateful no doubt, but still more exqu-

very account, when from the pulpit or the press, he enjoys with his admiring brethren the blessed effusions of those talents which were at first, perhaps, developed in his presence and by his instrumentality:—And when from the distant missionary settlement, the devoted activity and successful labours of this and the other servant of his Master are recorded with admiration and applause, will not the recollection be pleasing, that their first idea of usefulness in the vineyard of their Lord, took its rise from a feeling of power and pious zeal, excited by the blessing of God under his influence?—Such things have been, and such things may yet be, to him who, in the strength of God, and in the exercise of faith and prayer, again resolutely sets himself to accomplish them.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

*On the Criminal backwardness of Christians to become Sabbath School Teachers.*

EVERY one in the little world of his own mind, is in active pursuit after happiness. The worldly man circumscribes his exertions and views within the limits of time; while the Christian, overlooking that narrow boundary, penetrates by faith into the eternal world, and makes every thing in life subservient to the establishment and increase of his happiness in heaven.

Although salvation is altogether of grace, yet the degrees of happiness in glory will be enjoyed by the saints in exact accordance with their spi-

ritual attainments and labours in this world. He who gains ten talents shall have ten cities; while he who gains five talents shall have but five cities. 'To labour for God, then, from a principle of love and gratitude, having an eye at the same time to the recompence of reward in eternity, presents the most rational stimulus to persevering exertion which can be held out to an immortal creature upon earth; and the great inquiry of every one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart should be, "How and where may I so exercise my talents in the service of God in time, as shall tend most to advance the divine glory, and thus to increase my happiness through eternity?"

There is no field of exertion to the zealous and devout Christian so promising as the religious instruction of the young. Whether we consider the glory which shall accrue to God in the salvation of souls,—the extent of the field,—the invaluable fruits likely to be produced,—the satisfaction caused in the labourer's own mind here,—or the glorious reward specially promised to exertions of this kind hereafter;—in all these respects, the labours of the private Christian as a Sabbath school teacher leave every other species of exertion at an immeasurable distance. Feeding the poor,—clothing the naked,—relieving distress,—and every other labour of love, which has a respect merely to this world, though good and praiseworthy in themselves, and duties, which every Christian, according to his ability, will make conscience of performing,—reach no farther than the little moment of time;—whereas benefits procured for a soul, shoot their blessed influence into, and will continue to be *felt throughout eternity*. The Christian, then, who

has been made the instrument of saving one soul, has been the means of producing more happiness, than has ever been procured, by the relief of mere temporal distress, all put together, ever since the world began.

To every devout Christian who considers these things attentively, an opportunity in the providence of God to engage in the instruction of the Young, will be considered a very valuable privilege. But if any pious Christian should not be induced to engage in this labour of love by the consideration of its being a *privilege*, he ought likewise to examine whether it be not also his *duty*. The Divine Spirit has, in sovereign mercy, chosen you, my fellow Christian, as the recipient of his illuminating grace; and your Lord has positively enjoined you, in return, to make the light thus communicated so to shine upon, and for the benefit of all within the circle of your influence, as shall tend to lead them to the knowledge of God, and his Son Jesus Christ. But how do you obey this plain and positive command of your gracious Master? Your candle has been lighted;—but that was the work of God himself, and not yours. Your light shines;—that also is the work of the Spirit. But where, and for whom does it shine? For yourself, and yourself, alone. He has given you the light, and has directed you where to place, and how to use it; but *this*, which is *your* part of the work, is not done. The blackness and darkness of ignorance, and error, and sin, reign in every street, and lane, and tenement around you,—some corner of which you might enlighten and cheer, if you *would*. The plain commandment of your Lord is either misunderstood, or explained away, for the soothing of *your* conscience; or it is known, but obedience is



postponed, or perhaps refused, on some inadequate pretence. From whatever cause, the command of your Lord is not obeyed. Your candle is under the bushel, and your candlestick is unoccupied. Darkness reigns around you; but you will not pour one ray of light into any of its recesses. Like the hands of Moses at Rephidim, those of your brethren hang down for want of help, while you stand by idle, and are allowing the battles of the Lord to go backward. Souls are perishing thick around you, "drawn" by ignorance and sin "unto death, and ready to be slain," while you, with indifference, are saying, "Behold! we knew it not." But, "shall not he that pondereth the heart consider it?"

In this department of usefulness there are few, if any, who, when such an opportunity occurs, will be able to excuse themselves for thus standing "all the day idle."—It is a field of exertion open to every Christian. Few comparatively have the means of relieving, to any great extent, the poor and the needy; but every Christian may have an opportunity of communicating to one child, or to children, the knowledge of Christ and the blessings of salvation. Silver and gold perhaps they have none, and therefore cannot bestow them; but such benefits as they have let them freely communicate; and in this field, above all others, there is only wanting the willing mind. The common excuse made for declining this duty by most people, is generally *the want of ability*. We shall examine this excuse, and we hope that it will be found to be generally groundless, and, in some cases, highly criminal.

*It is admitted to be the duty of parents to in-*

struct *their own children* in the knowledge of the gospel, and in baptism they solemnly become bound to do so; yet no one ever heard of a Christian parent hesitating to take these vows upon him from a consciousness of *inability* to perform them. And though in this, as in every other line of duty, there is a variety of talents required, yet even the man who possesses the one talent only, is capable of improving it for the glory of God and the good of souls. He may not be able, perhaps, to do much, but he may do something;—He may not be able to acquire ten talents, but he may improve one. In short, “if the iron is blunt, he must put to the more strength.” His want of ability, though a good reason for greater exertion, can never be admitted as an excuse for idleness in the instruction of his children.

But in how many instances is this excuse of the want of ability to instruct the young, a mere pretext? If it arises from a real or supposed *want of knowledge*, Christians are highly criminal in remaining one day in such a state, when the means of instruction are within their power; and if it arises only from a supposed want of ability to *communicate* the knowledge they possess, it is as much their duty to endeavour to acquire it, which can be done only by practice.

Again, this duty of teaching the young is eminently under the superintendence and direction of the elders of the church; and yet persons who make this excuse, if otherwise qualified and willing, would not object, *on this account*, to become members of session; and no greater insult could be offered to them, than seriously to affirm, as an objection to their being elected to such an office, that

they were unable, from whatever cause, to instruct their own children at home.

If then Christians are capable of instructing *their own children*, they are also capable of instructing the children of others, *if they choose to do so*; and therefore let them rest their excuse for neglecting this great work upon what other ground they please, it can never rest with propriety or justice upon this supposed want of ability.

The truth is, that the grand cause of inactivity in this interesting field, are to be found in *indolence* and *pride*. We are speaking at present, not of nominal Christians, but of real,—of those who are indeed the children of God. And yet, strange as it may appear, such are too often chargeable in this instance, with these vices.

Of the baneful principle of *indolence*, we shall at present say nothing further than this, that if Christians were but alive to their own privileges, and had a proper and abiding sense of their obligations to God, and the value of souls, they would not thus “stand all the day idle.” The time is at hand when their conduct will cause a pang; and the additional happiness and glory which they thus lose, will be a loss acknowledged, felt, and lamented on the brink of eternity.

But the latent workings of existing *pride* in the Christian's mind, which too often shut the door of usefulness, and prevent him from going forth to labour in this important field, is a more common evil than any other. This is not only a deep stain in his character, but will also prove a rankling thorn in his side; and while this propensity is indulged, it will depress, if not wither and destroy, many of the seedlings of grace implanted in the heart by

the Spirit of God, which would otherwise "bud and blossom as the rose."

This principle of pride exhibits itself in a variety of forms in the Christian's conduct, but it is perhaps most observable in the neglect of family worship, and in the fear of exposure in a Sabbath school. Many a Christian secretly pines under the consciousness of impropriety, if not of sin, in the neglect of the first, who yet cannot summon up sufficient courage to commence prayer before his family, servants, or companions. The same is the case with many in regard to a Sabbath school. They are afraid of making a stop,—running out of matter,—and above all, they are terrified at the thought of extemporary prayer. The Christian will not trust God in this instance for words; and his faith has not yet attained such strength as to make him willing to "become a fool for Christ's sake." Thus is the stumbling block of pride permitted from year to year to obstruct his usefulness, without one effectual effort being made for its removal. He is still found lingering on the side of Jordan; longing for the opposite bank, but afraid to venture the passage; though he is assured by Scripture, and the experience of others, that the very effort is success; and that when, like the priests of old, he shall but dip his foot in the waters, they will instantly recede, and allow him to pass over with ease and in safety.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*Encouragement and Hints to Sabbath School Teachers.*

THE duties of a Sabbath School teacher with his children are threefold;—*Singing, Prayer, and Communicating Religious Instruction.*

*As to the exercise of celebrating the praises of God* with the children, we shall only say, that it is a duty much delighted in by the young, and care should be taken that it be spiritually performed. Any musical defect on the part of the teacher is a matter of small moment; but as assistance in this department is easily procured even from among the children themselves, praise should not if possible be neglected.

*The exercise of prayer* before children is generally thought a more alarming part of a teacher's duty, particularly at the beginning of his labours. But with every allowance for the most nervous timidity, we must say, that the alarm is in a great measure a mere phantom of the imagination. It originates almost entirely in two most erroneous ideas regarding prayer; first that prayers must be really *extempore*; and second, that they must be *long*.

From what has been said, p. 156, as to training children to the exercise of prayer, it must be obvious that the same means used by a teacher will produce the same effects; and although it be very desirable, that prayer should be *extempore*,—yet it is not absolutely necessary. Let a short studied *form* be used by him at first, till he finds himself

more at ease; and let him by degrees, and from time to time, add a confession, an acknowledgment, or a petition, as he may see necessary, or as he feels himself capable. In this way he will soon acquire abundance of ideas, and will feel no difficulty in clothing these with proper language.

That prayers with children should be *long*, is a sentiment as absurd as it is dangerous. In this, as in every part of his instructions, the teacher ought to carry the minds and hearts of the children along with him; but this cannot be done in a long prayer. With them more especially, his words should be "few and well ordered," lest he lead them, as well as himself, into sin. A just impression of the majesty of that Being whom he addresses, and the sacredness of the act itself, should keep him from speaking unadvisedly, as well as from being moved by the presence of mere creatures.

*The communicating of religious instruction to children* from their tasks, too, is much easier than is generally imagined. The mere *repeating* of the tasks should occupy as little time as possible; the great object of the teacher being to take care that the children understand them. The accomplishment of this, as we have shown, will be most easily attained by asking questions; and the greatest evil to be avoided, is in the teacher *saying too much*, and allowing the children to *say too little*.—Prelecting and sermonizing to children have done much mischief both to teachers and taught. Catechising is the best, perhaps the only effectual way of securing the attention of young people, particularly in the early stages of their education, and till they have acquired such a number of ideas as will enable them to arrange the lengthened discourse

of others in their own mind, without much difficulty or mental fatigue.

Referring to the former chapters, and the Appendix of this work for the manner of communicating religious instruction, and the nature of the tasks, we would only add here, that the preparation of the teacher at home for explaining the tasks to the children in the school, will, in his own improvement, repay his trouble a thousand fold; and should he at any time find himself at a loss, let him use such helps as he may be able to procure; and these helps were never more numerous nor more valuable than in the present day.

Thus may the private Christian become an honoured and successful labourer, under God, in sowing the seeds of the word, reclaiming souls from hell, and leading the young to heaven and to happiness. The harvest of such a seed time is not to be calculated. The Sabbath School teacher has, in the respect, affection, and kindly feeling of his rising pupils, as well as in the luxury of his Master's approbation, and the consciousness of doing good, a rich reward, even now, for all his trouble and pains; but when the seed which he has been enabled to sow in the hearts of any of the children shall, by the grace of God, ripen into the fruits of holiness and joy, many a heart shall warm at the recollection of his labours, and bless God on his account. How many in the dangerous paths of vanity and business may, at the remembrance of his instructions, gird up the loins of their minds, and press forward with renewed alacrity in their journey to heaven! How many a sick-bed and death-bed may be robbed of their terrors by his means, *though unknown to himself!* And tears of affec-

tion and gratitude may yet be shed at his grave, by the children's children of those who delighted to cherish and to bless his memory.

But the consummation of his reward extends beyond the narrow limits of time. Eternity alone shall make known the extent of his usefulness, and the value of his labours. And when monarchs and kings, and the great men of the earth, who lived but for themselves, shall shrink back in terror and dismay before the judgment throne of the Almighty, he who has laboured for God in doing good to souls, will be enabled to lift up his head with triumph and joy, while he shall say, "Behold me, and the children whom thou hast given me."

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### *A word of Warning, and Matters for the Consideration of Christian Parents.*

It is a settled principle, that every Christian parent should see that his children are really and effectually instructed in the doctrines of the gospel. The principle itself is never disputed; but the manner of putting it in practice is exceedingly various in different individuals. Some there are who look upon this duty in all its magnitude; and who, feeling the extent of their own responsibility, set themselves diligently and conscientiously to perform it; while others are to be found, claiming to themselves the name of Christians, and to whom we dare not refuse the appellation, who seem, however, *desirous only of silencing their conscience, and of*



evading the spirit of their duty by substituting in its place an empty form. After a listless, lifeless, unmeaning routine of reading or catechising, they look calmly upon the ignorance, or perhaps the wickedness of their children, and say, "What more can we do?" To each of these classes we would offer a few words for their consideration.

*1st, Those parents who give themselves little trouble, and who feel careless and indifferent about the religious instruction of their children, would do well to consider whose their children are, and what they are.*

Your children are God's, and have not been given you as mere toys and playthings for your amusement, while you are spared with each other. They are the property of your Master in heaven. They are part of the lambs of Christ's fold committed to your care, as their under shepherd, to be led out by "the footsteps of the flock;" to be carefully warned against, and preserved from, the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh; and, by your instrumentality, under the blessing of God, introduced and secured within the green pastures, and led beside the still waters of his everlasting kingdom.

If they at last come short of this, you will not be blameless. God has given parents repeated promises of success in the faithful discharge of their duties, and he will be faithful and true to them all. Your want of success, therefore, is not to be attributed to God, but must rest altogether betwixt your child and yourself. Sin, and folly, and hatred to God, are no doubt bound up in the heart of your child, but prayer, correction, instruction, and example, are the means appointed for

their eradication, or suppression; and when faithfully and prayerfully used and persevered in, they must be successful. Examine then in what manner these have been used by you for the good of your child; and if you have failed, and one of the lambs of Christ's flock shall be lost by your carelessness, be assured he will call you to an account for your conduct.

But parents who are thus careless about the religious instruction of their children, ought not only to consider *whose* their children are, but also *what* they are. They are not, as we said before, ingenious temporal toys,—things of a day,—mere delicate mechanical organs of flesh and blood,—which, when fed, and clothed, and preserved in order, by you, their parent, have had all done for them which they require. O no!—God has in them committed to you something more than that mere fleshly intelligent tabernacle, upon which all your care seems to be expended. That body is but the case,—the casket,—the shell, which incloses your child. It is but the mere servant, the organ of communication, by which its immortal resident within holds converse with the world without. It is but the temporary frame-work, which, with all your care and pains, must in a short time fall to pieces, and moulder in the dust; while the immortal inhabitant,—the soul,—*your child*,—shall remain untouched, and arise with renewed vigour from amidst the wreck of the body. It shall live for ever. The care which you have bestowed *upon it*, shall extend its influences into eternity; while all that has been lavished *upon the body*, shall be buried for ever in its grave.

The salvation of the soul of your child, then,

is infinitely more deserving of your regard, than the mere concerns of the body; and every thing which can stir you up to, or assist you in, attaining that object, ought to be hailed as a blessing of no ordinary importance. A Sabbath school is perhaps the best thing yet found for these purposes. To you it will prove an excellent auxiliary, though it ought never to be used as an excuse for your negligence. To your child it will be of incalculable value. Ignorance of his present guilt and danger, prevents him from appreciating the exertions which are being used for his benefit; but if by means of the instructions, and prayers, and exhortations thus enjoyed, the soul of your child shall be plucked as a brand from the fire, the instruments, or the place, or the means by which God has been pleased to accomplish it, will at last be matter of comparatively little moment. Strangers are thus, however, supplying your lack of duty; and this should excite you to take your part with them in your own work. Hail their endeavours for the good of your child; and while you continue to take the benefit of them, consider them only as a help,—a strengthening of your hands,—an auxiliary to your own exertions; never considering the help of another as an encroachment on your prerogative as a parent, but rejoicing in every means by which this most important part of a parent's duty may be progressively carried forward, and successfully accomplished.

*2d, To Parents who know the importance of religious instruction,—who, in some measure, feel the weight of their responsibility as the guardians of their children's souls, and who are conscientiously endeavouring to do their duty according to*

the ability which God has given them, we would, with great deference and sympathy, simply lay before them a few thoughts for their serious consideration.

The question has often been put, "Should pious and conscientious parents avail themselves of the privileges of a Sabbath School? Should they, when opportunity occurs, send their children to them as scholars?" The question is of importance, and we shall endeavour to examine it.

In deciding any question of practical importance, we should endeavour to lay it before the mind in its simplest form, and to judge of it without being swayed by the opinions of others, or any pre-conceived notions of our own. These opinions may, indeed, afterwards lead us to modify our conduct in *acting* upon our judgment, but they should never be allowed to interfere with the *forming* of it.

The above question, then, might perhaps be put to a Christian parent in another form, thus: "Will your children, in addition to the instructions, and religious exercises in which they engage *with you* on the Sabbath-day, be *farther benefited* by the instructions and exercises of the Sabbath School?" The answer must, in every particular case decide the question to that parent, whether he ought to avail himself of the privileges or not.

This is a matter, therefore, which every parent must examine and decide *for himself*; and the following remarks are merely thrown out for his consideration, to assist him in coming to a decision.

1st, A parent must consider, whether his availing himself of the privileges of a Sabbath school, will not tend to weaken his own hands, or tempt

him to remit his own exertions for the spiritual improvement of his children. He must never forget, that *his* duty remains unaltered, and *his* responsibility is the same, whether in this important work, he shall, or shall not avail himself of the assistance of others. His *own* spiritual improvement is involved in the regular religious communications which he has with his children, which makes a decided difference betwixt this, and the ordinary branches of education. But even in them though a parent takes the *assistance of a teacher* in training his children to read, &c. yet his duty is not performed, till he see the art acquired, and, if necessary, assist in accomplishing it,—though *he himself* requires no help of the kind. But in the exercises for eternity, he is as much a scholar as his children; and it would be a very unfavourable trait in his Christian character, were he to suppose, that in this respect he had no more to learn. If, then, a Sabbath school is likely to produce such a baneful effect, though it would be *better for the child*, yet it might be *much worse for the parent*; who, if he avail himself of the privileges, ought to be constantly on his guard against any deficiency in his own diligence.

2d, In judging of the propriety of participating in the privileges of a Sabbath School for his children, let the pious parent consider himself as a member of Christ's church, and inquire what line of conduct and example in *him*, will *most edify and benefit his brethren in general*. He should consider whether his taking this help for himself, will not encourage others to be remiss in their parental duties; or whether his children may not *fill a place* in the school, which might be occupied-

by others who require it more. On the other hand, you who are a pious and conscientious parent, should consider, whether your keeping your children *from* the school, *because they are instructed at home*, may not tempt others to keep back *their* children also, on purpose to conceal from others their neglect of this duty, which they have not performed, and do not intend to perform. And again, consider whether your example in sending your children, may not induce and encourage many to do the same, whose children would otherwise have no means of instruction. And lastly, Whether the attendance of your children, who are better instructed than many of the others, will not be an example to their fellow scholars, an encouragement to their teacher, and a credit to the school.

3d, Let a parent, in balancing betwixt the probable good and bad effects of a Sabbath school for his children, beware of giving too great a preponderance to *mere temporal matters*, whether these temporalities arise from family or personal convenience, or the more dangerous effects of deference to the opinions of the world as to what is called "respectability." Let him be on his guard against too degrading an opinion of other people's children, and too fashionable an opinion of his own. Distinctions of rank before God must be lost; and he must judge cautiously as to the propriety, or the impropriety, of allowing his children to sit or associate with those who are poor, rude, or perhaps wicked. These things ought to be considered; but they ought always to be contemplated *candidly*, and in the light of eternity. Let a parent consider *how these matters will appear to*

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him and his child in the judgment; and whether the spiritual good, which may thus be received at the school, will not at that day outweigh all the temporal evils; and let him act accordingly.

4th, Let the pious parent in deciding this question, consider, not only what is likely to be the future fruit produced in the children, but what is *their present duty* in regard to Sabbath school exercises. This is a part of the question which should enter deeply into a parent's consideration, before deciding upon his duty in it. Let him consider whether family religion would in any case form a good excuse for the neglect of public worship? Whether attendance on public worship is not the duty of his children, as well as of himself? And whether the public exercises of the Sabbath school, are not *the best species of public worship for children*? Let him consider what kind of worship God requires from all his intelligent creatures, children as well as adults; and, whether the mere *presence* of the child at church, without interest, without a capacity of comprehending the instructions of the minister, or of engaging in the spiritual exercises of the congregation, partakes of *spiritual worship*?

Without superseding, but in *addition* to this attendance of his child with himself in the house of God, let him consider, whether his child may not in the simple services of the Sabbath school, which are so well suited to his tender capacity, be more likely in this congregation of his fellows, to render *his* public spiritual service to his Father in heaven? and whether such exercises may not form an excellent and important, nay, almost a *necessary*, introduction to the more solid and spirit-

ual exercises of Christ's ministering servants in public.

These matters we leave for the special consideration and determination of every parent. Let him seek direction from God, and be cautious in his decision; judging of this subject in the same way in which wise men judge of their worldly matters,—“not as they *might be*, but as they *really are*.”

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### *Conclusion.—Application to Christians.*

WE now draw our subject to a close, and consign these observations to the stream of time and the course of events. We cast our bread upon the waters, but we do so in perfect confidence that it shall return to us after many days. The Christian world indeed seems evidently ripening for a more rational mode of training its successors; and whether it shall immediately, or at some future time, be awakened fully and generally to the importance of this subject, we feel quite assured, that something similar to what has been here recommended, must and will be adopted in the education of the young, before the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, or before the full harvest of good from pious progenitors can be reaped by their successors. It is the cause of reason,—of religion,—of the true worship of God,—and it must prevail. Indifference, or neglect, or even opposition, may be expected from the indolent or the interested.

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and these may for a while *retard* the progress of such endeavours, but they will never now be able to *stop them*.

The whole system of providence, indeed, seems at present big with important events for the next generation, and augurs well for the general adoption of a more effective system of religious instruction, founded on reason, and now confirmed by experience. Prejudices are rapidly giving way ; and old and absurd habits are declining both in credit and in power. The human intellect appears as if suddenly aroused from a state of torpor and lethargic indifference, and is now struggling in every department and grade of society, to emancipate itself from the yoke of prejudice, which has so long bound it down to customs and forms which have little if any thing to recommend them but their antiquity. Even those who look only to time and its enjoyments, are bestirring themselves in the cultivation of the higher qualities of man, and are successfully demonstrating, both to the prince and to the mechanic, the great superiority of enjoyments derived from mental and moral culture, above mere temporal comforts and sensual gratifications. This is evidently a breaking up of the way for the Christian. It is a removing for him the first obstacles in the progress of religion ; and it is now that the Christian should come forward, backed as he finds himself by the general sentiments of mankind, that he may, with the truths of the Bible, increase and confirm these sentiments and views, by successfully pointing out to the young, the only unfailing source from which these mental enjoyments can, *or ought to be derived*.

*We would therefore call on Christians of every*

class, and of every age, to assist in this great work. None need be idle. Wherever a child is to be taught, the very knowledge and recommendation to the parent or teacher, of a better system, is helping it forward. The children of the humble cottager, who dwells at your gate, may yet bless the memory of him or her, who first, by a "Key" or a "Help," put it into the mind and the power of their parent, effectually to teach them the *truths* of the gospel, and the way of salvation;—the inhabitants of the lonely hut in the glen or moor, may on their churchless Sabbaths, be induced, after their now interesting and improving exercises, to speak of, and pray for, the stranger who repaid their hospitality by what they now find to be a source of constant enjoyment; and the successive generations which shall emanate from this and the other Sabbath school, may be told of, or remember the individual, who first recommended the abandonment of a lifeless routine, for the reality of instruction,—the "beggary elements" for the spirit and enjoyments of a true and enlightened religion. Happy will it be for us, then, if we shall in any particular spot be made the honoured instruments of beginning, what will and must at some time be begun, and be among the first in establishing and advancing such a system of religious education as promises to be so useful to souls, to enlarge and to perpetuate the Bible and Missionary exertions of our own days, and to ensure the speedy dawn of the latter-day glories.

To *every private Christian*, of whatever age or rank, the simplicity, universal usefulness, and ease of application of the mode of teaching religion developed in the foregoing pages, place within his

power the means of being aseful. His neighbour's child, or children, may be collected and instructed, or those of the inhabitants of his house or his neighbourhood may be brought together, and successfully taught the things of God. The parents might by him be shown how to instruct their own children, and exhorted and encouraged in its performance; or other young Christians may be invited and assisted, under their superintendence, to do all this. We ourselves have seen one of fourteen years of age become the adopted parent of eleven children, belonging to different families, residing in the same tenement with herself;—and her success, with the "Keys," was truly gratifying. And who, we would ask, who is but willing, may not go and do likewise?

To *parents*, the Lesson Sytem of teaching their children holds out numerous advantages. It is, by reason of the assistances which it provides, within the reach of every capacity, and is not only perhaps the most successful, but also the least laborious of any other method we have seen. It is out of measure more animating, rational, and instructive, than the dull formal repeating and reading, which are too often substituted for religious instruction; and could parents but be persuaded for one month fairly to try it in their family, they would not only find it to be exceedingly profitable both to themselves and to their children, but also most pleasant and satisfactory. Were every parent to adopt the same course, the Christian world would soon assume a new appearance, and arise with a beauty and a vigour which has hitherto been unknown in the Church. Let us hope and pray for the coming of such days.

*Week-day and Parochial Teachers* will be able to glean some hints from these pages, which may be of some use to them in their important labours.—Some time in every week is, much to the honour of our country and of those who superintend the education of our children, devoted to religious instruction. Your laborious exertions in behalf of the children during the week, make that mode which shall secure you more help, and greater success, a matter of no small importance; and this, we think, may be gained from a consideration of the preceding remarks. Nay, even in the ordinary business of the school, when the children are called on to read their Bible in their classes, a zealous and godly teacher will be able, without interrupting the ordinary exercises, to ask a question, state a fact, or give a practical lesson, which will not only assist in the understanding of the section which they are then considering, but of any other which they may afterwards be required to read. These things need only to be pointed out;—the teacher who is desirous of his children's best interests will know how to apply them.

To *Sabbath School Teachers*, next to parents, the principles developed in this treatise are perhaps of the greatest importance. No one who has the welfare of his pupils at heart, can treat such a subject as a matter of indifference; and if any be convinced of the inefficiency of the modes of teaching religion which are commonly pursued, we would affectionately but solemnly warn him of the evils which may arise from his persevering in, and thus assisting to perpetuate, a system of instruction which is not only so barren of good, but which is also, as has been fully demonstrated, most pro-

lific of evil. The subject is certainly worthy of serious consideration,—and it should have it.—Weigh the whole matter well, seek direction from above, and act from conviction. Acknowledge the Lord in this, and he will direct your steps. Your complete adoption of a better course may be *gradual*, but its beginning should upon no account be delayed.

To *Ministers of the gospel*, the general promulgation of the Lesson System of training children in the knowledge of religion holds out a prospect of unmingled satisfaction. You perhaps know, how painful, how heartless a thing it is to minister unto, and to deal with people arrayed in prejudices and predilections, which remain impenetrable to argument, to conscience, sometimes to the Word of God itself. Such persons are not produced in a day,—and they would be fewer were they not countenanced and supported by many equally intractable and deaf to the dictates of reason.—But pity, and not anger, is the feeling which these should excite. It is the effect—the natural effect—of that mechanical and unnatural method in which they have been trained when young, and by which those rational powers, which were then neglected, are now found dead, frozen, imperturbable. But such days are now passing away, and the general adoption of a more wholesome and efficient system of instruction when you will prepare a generation which will better appreciate, and more rapidly improve under, the enlightened and liberal ministrations of their several pastors. Your influence, therefore,—your recommendation, advice, or authority—to parents, parochial and week-day teachers, and to all who

employed in training the young mind, should be constantly exerted to secure the abandonment of that absurd and destructive mechanical system of teaching, by which the Church of Christ has so long been fettered and retarded in the general march of intellect and enlightened piety, and that they now, on more natural principles, begin to deal with, and train up rational beings, and thus make ready a "people prepared for the Lord."

To *Governors and Directors of Hospitals* where the young are trained, the principles developed in the foregoing Treatise should not be matter of indifference. You are the adopted parents of a numerous and interesting family, each one of whom individually depends, in a great measure, upon the wisdom of your management for his future comfort and prosperity in life, and not a little also for his happiness in eternity. To "train up a child in the way he should go," is as imperative on you as on their own parents. While therefore, we would not impugn the wisdom of your management in appointing literary exercises, and ensuring to the children what is called a liberal education, we would, with much earnestness and anxiety, press upon your notice another point of at least equal importance. The public safety of our country,—the credit of your hospital, the fulfilment of your pledge to the founders of your institution, to the public, and to the parents of the children, and above all, your duty to the children themselves, all demand at least an equal share of your attention and care *to the duties of religion, and the concerns of their souls*. These we know are not neglected; but the matter for your inquiry is, "*How are they performed?*" It is not undervaluing your

institution below that of hundreds in similar circumstances, when we ask, if the religious knowledge of your children is not more shadowy than real, and if the pious exercises in which they engage are not, for a similar reason, more like a piece of mechanism; having the form, without any thing like the spirit of real religion or practical godliness? happy are you, as an individual, if this be not the case; but if it be, we do entreat you to do what you can as an individual to remedy it. Wash your hands of the crying guilt of sanctifying for ever an antiquated error, so absurd in its principle, and so dangerous in its practice. Let the subject of religion occupy, according to its importance, a share at least of the time spent in the attainment of languages,—which are too often lost in the learning,—not in unmeaning repetition and dull formality, but according to the true spirit of the principles unfolded in this Treatise. Be assured, that the truths of the gospel thus taught, and the sanctions of the Bible thus pressed upon the mind and the consciences of the children, will be found a better preparative for withstanding temptation, and prompting them to duty, than the pages of any heathen author; while the tenor of a life regulated by such principles will be an honour to your institution, a comfort to their friends and relations, and an unspeakable blessing to themselves. It may be said that the practice,—the immemorial practice of the institution,—renders any change in this respect inconvenient or unattainable. But this cannot be. Set aside the conflicting interests that would be incommoded by the *change*, the selfishness and the cold hearted indifference that would sacrifice the souls of hundreds,

for fear of personal inconvenience or trouble, and then weigh the circumstances, and the change *will* be found practicable. If not we do not envy the situation of those who have to bear the weight of a responsibility so perilous and so hopeless,—involving in it not only the temporal welfare, but also, in some measure, the eternal interests of so many immortal souls.

To *Societies, Committees, and Unions*, whose object is the religious instruction of the young, we would, in closing this Treatise, with much deference, offer our congratulations. You are the directors, the superintendents of the labours of the Christian public in this department of pious exertion; and we do most sincerely join with you in rejoicing at the prospect of better days, and of greater success for those who are under your direction and care. They look, and have hitherto looked, to you for instruction in their labours; and though the evils detailed and exposed in the preceding pages were seen and felt, yet the disease had existed so long, and its ramifications had become so extensive and powerful, that you and we could but look on with regret, but failed at the moment perhaps to perceive or supply the remedy. Now, however, the efficacy of the means employed for this purpose is happily matter of extensive experience. On all sides we perceive the dawn of new life and new vigour in the important matter of religious instruction; and it is now for you to examine and report as to its nature, and to recommend and encourage, by every means in your power, a return to a better system,—to a more wholesome, a more pleasant, and a much more effective mode of expending the exertions of your



pious labourers;—a method by which, with the same sacrifice of time and labour, a good at least ten times more extensive by the agents, and ten thousand times more valuable to the children, will be effected in this important department of Christian philanthropy. The time that has already elapsed cannot now be recalled; but we may, by instant activity and diligence, endeavour to redeem it, by preventing more weeks or months from being any longer wasted.—To all those who have hitherto mourned the extent of the evil of which we complain, and perceive the value of the remedy and its results, we would say, “What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”—We have much in our power, either for good or evil;—let us never forget, then, that “To whom much is given, of them also much shall be required.”

# APPENDIX.

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## No. I.

**TABLES of PROGRESSIVE EXERCISES, for Families and Schools, from which Parents or Teachers may select that which shall best suit the Age, Capacity or Circumstances of their Pupils.**

### PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

1. THE LESSON SYSTEM, professing to train Christians in the knowledge of religion from infancy to manhood, necessarily embraces a variety of exercises.

2. Each series of exercises adopted, should be of such a nature, that the great majority of the pupils may be able completely and perfectly to prepare them. A parent or teacher, therefore, ought not to persevere in any particular series, when he perceives that a great proportion of his pupils either cannot, or do not completely follow him in it; but should return to one which they will find less difficult.

3. The returning upon a particular series of exercises, which have been gone over before, is generally beneficial, particularly when a new exercise can be engrafted upon it.—To this circumstance the Initiatory Catechisms, with their various auxiliaries, owe much of their value.

4. When a series of exercises are once gone over, and the parent or teacher finds that the pupils do but imperfectly understand them, he ought never to hesitate in again commencing *the same series*. The children will derive a great deal more advantage by doing this, than if they were to begin something new, which it is to be feared would also, at the close prove nugatory. The "Introduction to the helps" should always be gone over carefully *at least twice*; which

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will greatly facilitate all the following exercises on the Scriptures.

5. There ought uniformly to be prepared for each night, one question from a Catechism, and one section from the Scriptures. These two are quite compatible with two hour teaching; and will carry on regularly the two great departments of religious education proposed by the Lesson System, — a thorough and connected knowledge of Christian doctrine, and a capacity of understanding and practically applying the truths of the Bible. To attain these objects, however, it should be steadily kept in view, that although the *exercises* on the tasks by the different classes may, and should vary, yet all the classes must, every night, have the *same question*, the *same section*, and the *same voluntary exercises*. No deviation from this rule should ever be allowed.

6. As a thorough knowledge of Scripture doctrine, and a facility in understanding and applying Scripture *when it is read*, are among the principal objects which a parent or teacher should contemplate, if these ends can at any time be more readily attained by some of the children *reading* their exercises from their books instead of in the first instance committing them to memory, it ought to be permitted.

7. The following progressive series of Tables are not intended to point out an *undeviating rule*. Parents and teachers may *pass over* such as they find they do not require, or may, from many, *select or combine* a series for themselves. They ought always, however, to remember and act upon the suggestions in Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5, of the above Observations.

8. The first classes being always understood to be taught the First Initiatory Catechisms by Assistants, are not mentioned in the following Tables. When the word (*Book*) occurs, it signifies, that the children should be allowed to use their Catechisms, or their Bibles, during the exercises. (See Observation 6.)

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*Progressive Steps in each of the Elementary Books commonly used in Teaching the Lesson System showing, the principles upon which the following Tables are formed.*

#### FIRST INITIATORY CATECHISM.

This little Catechism being usually taught to young Children, by means of its Key, requires no remark.

**SECOND INITIATORY CATECHISM**, with its Auxiliaries, viz. The "*One Hundred and Fifty Doctrines*," and the "*Doctrines in Rhyme*."

1. Answering the questions put from the Key, by reading the ing the Catechism.
2. Repeating the answer, and answering to the Key with the book.
3. Repeating the answer, and answering without the book.
4. Repeating and answering without the book, and repeating the corresponding Section in the Doctrines in Rhyme.
5. Repeating and answering without the book, and separating and proving the Doctrines by means of the "Hundred and Fifty Doctrines," with the book.
6. Same as No. 5, but without the book.
7. Repeating and answering without the book; and repeating the corresponding sections in the "Doctrines in Rhyme," and proving them with the Bible.
8. Same as No. 7, but the Doctrines proved without the Bible.

*N. B.* The application of the Doctrines by the teacher, as given in the Practical Reflections in the Key, should always be attended to although they be not mentioned here.

**"INTRODUCTION TO THE HELPS,"** with its auxiliary, the "*Introduction Hymns*."

1. The Exercise, Explanations, and Lessons, with the book; the teacher giving the announcements and lessons. These three exercises ought never to be separated.
2. The Exercise without the book; but the Explanations and Lessons with the book, as in No. 1.
3. The Exercise, Explanations, and Lessons without the book. The teacher still giving the announcements. The corresponding hymn in the "Introduction Hymn book," may also now be repeated.
4. Same as No. 3, but the scholar should now be left to draw forth the announcements as well as the Lessons.

**HELP TO THE GOSPELS**, and the other HELPS, with their auxiliaries, "*Harmony Hymns*," &c.

The progressive order with these is the same as with the Introduction:—The teacher making use of the Analysis and parts of prayer as his own prudence, and the capacities of his pupils may suggest.

**The SHORTER CATECHISM**, *with its auxiliaries; viz. "Exercises on the Shorter Catechism," "Paraphrase on the Shorter Catechism," and the "New Proof Catechism."*

1. Questions answered with the book, from the Exercises or the Key.
2. Questions from the Key, answered without the book.
3. Questions from the Key as in No. 2, and the Explanations given with the book.
4. Questions from the Key, and the Explanations, without the book.
5. Questions from the Key, Explanations, and parts of the Paraphrase formed; with the book.
6. Same as No. 5, without the book.
7. Questions from the Key, the Explanations, and complete Paraphrase formed, with the book.
8. Same as No. 7, without the book.
9. Questions from the Key and Doctrines separated, with the book.
10. Questions from the Key and Doctrines separated, without the book; Doctrines proved, with the book.
11. Same as No. 10, but without the book.
12. Questions, Explanations, Paraphrase formed, and Doctrines separated and proved, as in the Key.

#### TABLE A.

*To be used where the Lesson System is as yet unknown, or when it is tried as an experiment, in addition to the usual Exercises of the School.*

2d and 3d Classes,—One question of the Second Initiatory Catechism; (omitting the second,) the children being catechised from the Key, but using their Catechisms, and answering from it; the teacher himself separating the doctrines, and showing how they are proved.

Or, one section of the "Introduction to the Help to the Gospels;" the children using their Bibles and the teacher catechising from the exercises, giving the announcements from each verse, and showing how the lessons are drawn.

*N. B.* This last experiment being from the Bible, may at any time be tried in a family or school, and will at once demonstrate the great utility of this method of teaching. The parent or teacher after reading the

whole passage without catechising, should begin again; and from the exercise in the Introduction, catechise the children thoroughly on *one verse* before reading and catechising on the next. After he has examined the children thoroughly from the Exercise on all the verses, he should go over the explanations as found in the Introduction; and then, stating the circumstance from which the lesson arises, and reading the verse from which it is taken, he should show the children how the lesson is drawn from it and make several of them repeat it after him. He ought not as yet, however, to attempt the application of the lessons.

After a few trials of this kind he will most probably find some of the children able, without learning it, to repeat, or at least to give him the substance of the whole passage from memory. Sections of Scripture thus acquired are not easily forgotten.

## TABLE B.

2d and 3d Classes,—One question of the Second Initiatory Catechism. (With the book.)

One section "Introduction to the Helps." (With the book.)

Their *Voluntary Exercises* should consist of the section in the "Doctrines in Rhyme," corresponding to their question in the Catechism; or the "Introduction Hymn" corresponding to their section in the "Introduction." No other voluntary tasks should be repeated, except those prescribed for the whole school, although the children may be encouraged to prepare them, if they be really voluntary. Religious instruction, if it be possible, should never be made burdensome.

## TABLE C.

2d Class,—One question of the Second Initiatory Catechism. (With the book.)

3d Class,—Same question. (Without the book.)

2d Class,—One Section of the Introduction. (With the book.)

3d Class,—Same section. (Without the book.)

*Voluntary Exercises.* (See Table B.)

## TABLE D.

2d Class,—One question of the Second Initiatory Catechism.

3d Class,—Same question, with the corresponding section of the "Doctrines in Rhyme."

2d Class,—One section of the Introduction.

3d Class,— do. do.

*Voluntary Exercises*, as in B. with Proof.

## TABLE E.

- 2d Class,—One question of the Second Initiatory Catechism, with the corresponding section in the "Doctrines in Rhyme."
- 3d Class,—The same question, with the corresponding section in the "Hundred and Fifty Doctrines." (With the book.)
- 2d Class,—One section in the Introduction, with the Application of the Lessons. (With the book.)
- 3d Class,—Same section, with the Application, and corresponding Hymn.

*Voluntary Exercises.* Same as B. with Proofs and additional Proofs.

## TABLE F.

- 2d Class,—One question in the Second Initiatory Catechism, and the corresponding section in the "One Hundred and Fifty Doctrines." (With the book.)
- 3d Class,—The same question, and the corresponding section of the "One Hundred and Fifty Doctrines." (Without the book.)
- Both Classes,—One section of the Introduction, with the Application, and corresponding Hymn.
- Both Classes,—One question of the Shorter Catechism read, the children catechised from the Key, and the explanations given from the notes in the *Paraphrase*, the children using their books.

*N. B.*—As the explanations of the difficult words and phrases in the Shorter Catechism, as well as the catechetical exercises upon it, are of primary importance, the class-books used previous to the children's learning the proofs, should be the "*Paraphrase on the Shorter Catechism*," for the sake of the explanations in the Notes, or the "*Exercises on the Shorter Catechism*," which also includes these. This last book, both as it enables the child to prepare his exercises on the Shorter Catechism at home, and the parent to examine him in the same manner as the teacher, is the most valuable, but for a large school might be too expensive.

The teacher should frequently go back upon the Initiatory Catechisms, without, however, allowing the children to use their books.

## TABLE G.

- 2d Class,—One question from the Shorter Catechism.—Children catechised from the Key, and the Explanations given from the notes in the *Paraphrase*, with their books.

3d Class,—Same exercises, but without their Books.

Both Classes,—One section from the "Introduction" or the "Helps."

*N. B.*—The Helps to the books of the Old Testament, ought not to be used *every Sabbath*. This would be too exclusive of the New Testament; and therefore, should not be used more frequently than on each alternate Sabbath at most, or what would be still better, on the first Sabbath of each month. In this last case, these exercises should be made *voluntary tasks*, and should comprehend several chapters at a time, to be read, understood, and applied, but *not committed to memory*. This could be done once a-month, after the other exercises of the school are finished, without at all interfering with them. Exercises coming *voluntarily* from the children themselves possess many advantages, and are productive of many more.

#### TABLE H.

2d Class,—One question from the Shorter Catechism.

3d Class,—Same question, with the Explanations.

Both Classes,—One section from Introduction or Helps.

*Voluntary Exercises.*—One, two, or more chapters read from some part of the Old Testament. All the children must have the same, and only five or ten minutes should each night be dedicated to the examination upon them; but one night in the month may be specially set apart, after the other exercises, for the more particular examination, explanation, and application of these chapters. (See Table G.)

#### TABLE I.

2d Class,—One question of the Shorter Catechism. Explanations.

3d Class,—Same question, with parts of the Paraphrase formed. (With the Book.)

Both Classes,—Section from the Introduction, or the Helps.

*Voluntary Exercises.* (See Table H.)

#### TABLE K.

2d Class,—One question of the Shorter Catechism. Explanations given, and parts of the Paraphrase formed.

3d Class,—Same question. Paraphrase completed. (Book.)

Both Classes —Section from the Introduction, or Helps



## TABLE L.

2d Class,—One question of the Shorter Catechism. Explanations, and Paraphrase completely formed. (Book.)

3d Class,—Same question. (Without the Book.)

Both Classes,—Section from the introduction, or Helps.

*Voluntary Exercises.* (See Table H.)

## TABLE M.

Both Classes,—One question of the Shorter Catechism.—Doctrines separated and proved. (With the Book.)

Both Classes,—One section from the Introduction, or Helps.

*Voluntary Exercises.*—Lessons written on the former section, or on the section for the evening, and given in to the teacher.

## TABLE N.

2d Class,—One question of the Shorter Catechism; doctrines separated.

3d Class,—Same question; doctrines separated and proved. (With the book.)

Both Classes,—Section from the Introduction, or Helps.

*Voluntary Exercises.* (See Table M.)

## TABLE O.

2d Class,—One Question of the Shorter Catechism; doctrines separated and proved. (With the book.)

3d Class,—Same, and exercises. (Without the book.)

Both Classes,—Section from the Introduction, or Helps.

*Voluntary Exercises.* (See Table M.)

## TABLE P.

2d Class,—One question of the Shorter Catechism; doctrines separated and proved.

3d Class,—Same Exercises, with additional Proofs.

Both Classes,—Section from the Introduction, or Helps.

*Voluntary Exercises.* (See Table M.)

## No. II.

*Hints on the Art of Catechising.*


THOSE who have been much engaged in teaching children, know, that there are two distinct modes of catechising, which may properly enough be termed the *direct*, and the *indirect*, or elliptical.

The *direct* method of catechising refers immediately to the words which a child has been reading, or repeating, and to that alone. It requires only that he should understand their meaning, to be enabled to give his answer. For example, if a child should read or repeat the verse, "Children obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." The questions, "Who are to obey their parents?" "What are children to do to their parents?" "Who are to be obeyed?" &c. &c. are *direct* questions, because the children have only to consider and understand the *words* read or repeated, to be able to give an answer. But if the teacher wished that the child should learn what was *meant* by this duty being "well pleasing" to God, or what was intended by the term "all things," or what *practical lessons* were to be drawn from the verse, the mode of catechising would then be *indirect*; because the teacher would have to form his questions, not from the *words before him*, but in such a manner as to bring the child by degrees to perceive the meaning of what was asked.

We shall offer a few words in illustration of each of these methods.

*Of the Direct Method of Catechising.*

This method should always be used in the instruction of *young children*, before the reasoning faculties begin to be developed. It is by far the easiest in its application, and may be practised with great efficacy and usefulness by *older children* in the instruction of the young. These may be taught to do so by the following simple rule:—viz. *To make every principal word in the verse, or proposition, read or repeated by a Child, if possible, the ANSWER to a question.* The whole of



the art consists in attention to this simple rule, and may soon be learned by any young person of ordinary capacity. The following verse will serve as a sufficient example.

"[<sup>1</sup> Children] [<sup>2</sup> obey] [<sup>3</sup> your] [<sup>4</sup> parents] in [<sup>5</sup> all things,] for [<sup>6</sup> this] is [<sup>7</sup> well pleasing] unto [<sup>8</sup> the Lord.]"

All the words printed within brackets, are capable of being turned into answers. And the art of catechising consists in *forming the questions*, so that the child shall be obliged to give, as the answer, the word upon which that question is formed.

The first word "*children*," No. 1, should have the question formed thus, "Who are to obey their parents in all things?" The answer is, "Children." No. 2 must have its question formed in this manner, "What are children to do to their parents?" or, "What is the duty of children to their parents?" and the answer is, "Obey them." The others in their order should be formed thus:

3. Whose parents should Children obey?
4. Who are children to obey? (This question ought to be put before No. 3.)
5. In what are children to obey their parents?
6. What is well pleasing? ("This," or, children obeying their parents.)
7. What is obedience to God said to be?
8. To whom is the obedience of children well pleasing?

It will at times happen, however, that some of the most important words in a passage are incapable of being thus turned into answers in the *direct* method; but in such cases, the teacher may either explain them directly to the child, or catechise him in the indirect or elliptical manner.

This art, thus explained, is simple and easy; and therefore it becomes a matter of great importance, that all, and particularly young people, should be set to practise it, in instructing their younger companions, or their brothers and sisters.

### *Of the Indirect, or Elliptical method of Catechising.*

This method of catechising is somewhat similar to what is commonly called the Socratic mode of reasoning. The question asked must be so put, as that the answer shall pre-

pare the way for the next question, till the child is brought to a point, where he himself finds out the thing wanted.

The following are given as examples.

Suppose that the teacher should wish to explain what is meant by the term, "all things," and to show that obedience to parents in *all things* meant only such things as were agreeable to the revealed will of God, he should not explain this directly, but should endeavour to arrange his questions in such a manner as to bring the child himself to perceive that this is the case. Thus :

Q. Who has the first claim to our obedience ?

A. God.

Q. Why is God to be obeyed in preference to every one else ?

A. Because he is the Maker and Preserver of all things.

Q. Is God to be obeyed in preference to our parents ?

A. Yes.

Q. If then God forbids you to do what your parents require, whom should you obey ?

A. God.

Q. What then is meant in the text by a child's obeying his parents in "all things ?"

A. It means all things which God does not forbid.

Again, if the teacher should wish the child to explain the term, "well pleasing," it might be done thus,

Q. What is it to be *pleased* with any thing ?

A. It is to be happy, or satisfied on account of it.

Q. What is it to be *well pleased* with any thing ?

A. It is to be much satisfied on account of it.

Q. What then is meant by obedience to parents being "well pleasing" to God ?

A. It means that he is much satisfied with, or on account of our obedience to our parents.

In these exercises, the teacher must necessarily be guided by his own ingenuity and skill, which care and practice will continually improve.

If, again, in the well known parable of the prodigal son, Luke xv. it is wished that the child should explain, of himself, the meaning of any of the words there used ; suppose, for example, the phrase verse 12, "Portion of goods that falleth to me," it might be done by the indirect mode of catechising in this way :

Q. If I had promised these half-dozen tracts to the three best scholars, and you were one of them, what would you do if I forgot my promise ?

A. I would put you in mind of it.

Q. What would you wish me to do ?

A. To divide the tracts.

**Q.** If I did divide them thus, and said, "This is the portion which falleth to you," what would I mean?

**A.** That it was my part, or share of the tracts.

**Q.** Look at the verse then, and tell me now, what is meant by "Portion of goods which falleth to me?"

The child would here answer with readiness, that it meant the son's part or share, of his father's goods or property.

By this method of catechising, also the children may sometimes be enabled to draw out from a passage those practical lessons which it suggests, with much pleasure and effect. Of this we shall give a few examples. In this same parable of the prodigal son, there are two or three palpable lessons which arise from the 12th verse, where we are told that the *younger* son requested his share of the property, that he might get away from the restraints of his father's roof; and that the father at last granted this request of his son, though it was not good for him.

The lessons which these circumstances suggest, might be elicited from some of the children in a way similar to the following:

**Q.** What made the younger son so desirous of leaving his father?

**A.** That he might live as he pleased.

**Q.** How did he behave when he left his father?

**A.** He wasted his substance with riotous living.

**Q.** What was the consequence of all this?

**A.** He brought himself to misery and ruin.

**Q.** Would this have happened if he had remained with his father?

**A.** No.

**Q.** What lesson then do you learn from this?

**A.** That it is better for children to be guided and directed by their parents, than to have all their own will.

Another lesson might shortly be drawn from the same verse, thus:—

**Q.** Who are meant by the Father and the Son?

**A.** God and the sinner.

**Q.** What was the consequence of the father's allowing the son to have what he desired?

**A.** It was the cause of his ruin.

**Q.** What lesson do you learn from that?

**A.** That God sometimes grants the desire of the sinner, and permits him to obtain such things as ultimately prove his ruin.

Another may be drawn from the same subject, thus:—

**Q.** Would it have been kind or otherwise in the father to have refused the imprudent desire of his son?

**A.** It would have been great kindness.

**Q.** What do you learn from that?

**A.** That it is kind in God to refuse us what we desire, when it would do us harm.

By a little attention and study on the part of a teacher, in following out this mode with the other lessons, he will find such an improvement in his own capabilities, in attaining and communicating spiritual knowledge, as will of itself be a rich reward for all his trouble.

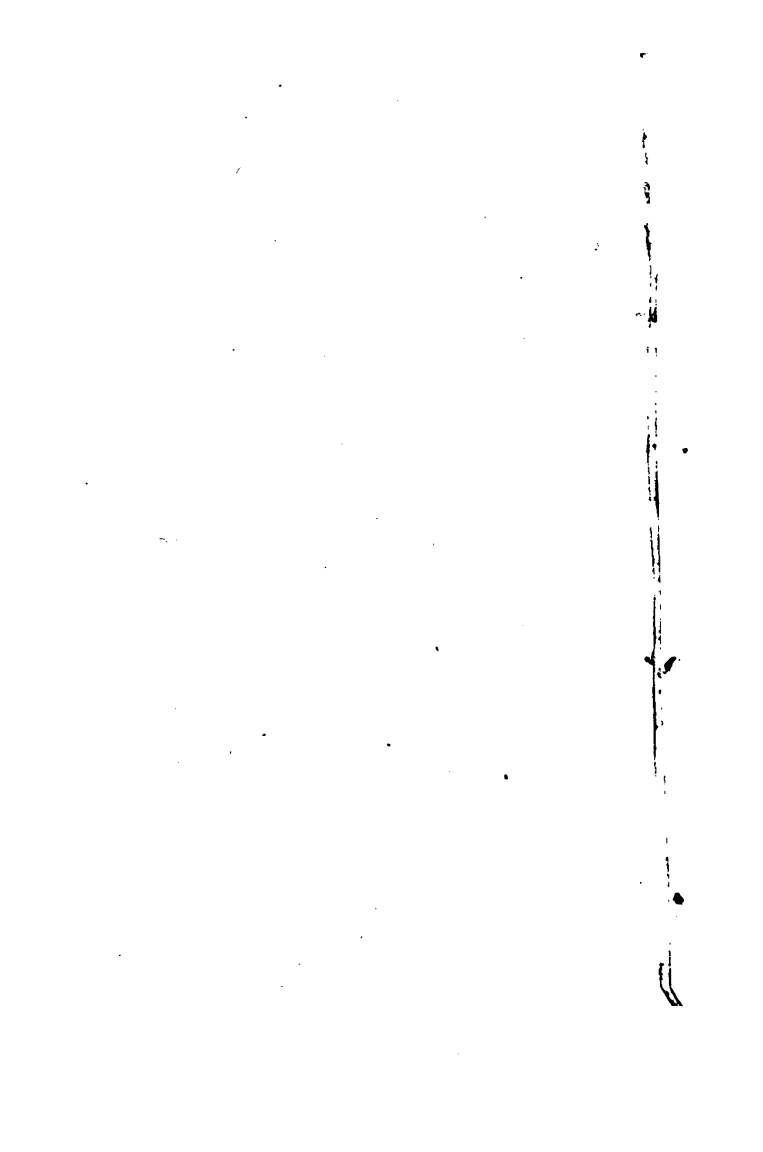
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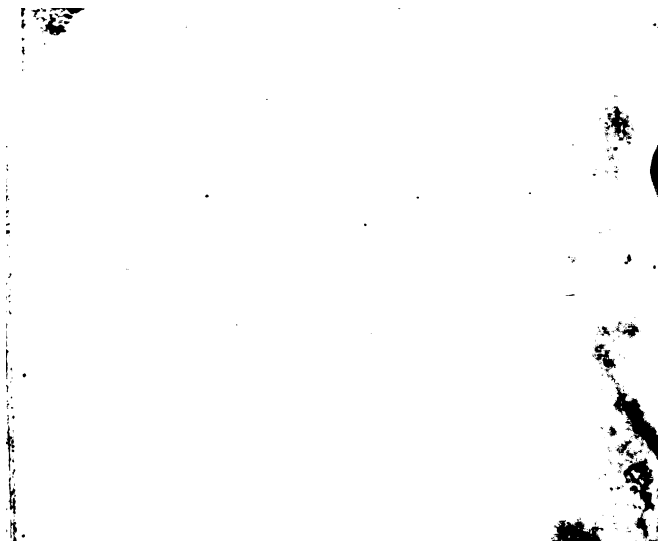
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